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MUSIC

The real business of the critic

By Charles Rosen

DAN H. LAURENCE (Editor):
Shaw's Music
The complete music criticism in
three volumes
Volume I: 1876-1890
957pp. 0 370 30247 8
Volume II: 1890-1893
985pp. 0 370 30249 4
Volume III: 1893-1950
910pp. 0 370 30248 6
Bodley Head. £15 each.

"Who am I that I should be just?"
wrote Shaw in reply to a letter to the
editor of the *Star* from an aggrieved
member of the Globe orchestra
which had played Edward German's
incidental music to Shakespeare's
Richard III. Shaw had reviewed the
production of Richard Mansfield at
the invitation of the *Star*'s dramatic
critic, A. B. Walkley. He explained
(March 23, 1889):

As a matter of fact, I did go to the
Globe, not because Walkley
wished me to hear "Mr Edward
German's fine music, with its
leit-motifs after Wagner's plan" (hal
hal hal), but because a musician
only has the right to criticize
works like Shakespeare's earlier
histories and tragedies. The two
Richards, King John and the last
act of *Romeo and Juliet* depend
wholly on the beauty of their
music. There is no deep signifi-
cance, no great subtlety and varie-
ty in their numbers; but for splen-
dour of sound, magic of romantic
illusion, majesty of emphasis,
ardour, elation, reverberation of
haunting echoes, and every poetic
quality that can awaken the heart-
soul and the imaginative fire of
early manhood, they stand above
all recorded music. These things
cannot be appreciated (Walkley signs
himself Spectator); they must be
heard. It is not enough to see
Richard III.: you should be able to
whistle it! (Vol I, pp 585-87).

This is one of the most splendid
shots in Shaw's long campaign of
debunking Shakespeare, and it shows
him as the greatest master of the
paradoxical encomium since the Re-
naissance.
It is almost always a mistake to
write letters to an editor; the un-
happy Globe musician had much to
complain of in the review, including
Shaw's estimate that the orchestra
consisted of only twenty-two players.
Shaw disposed of his objections with
evident relish (March 30, 1889):

With all the gentleman's ingenuity
and exceptional opportunities of
knowing Mr German's score, he
has succeeded in convincing me of
only fifteen mistakes in an entire
column of *The Star*: a result which
speaks for itself. . . If there were
really "about thirty" players in-
stead of twenty-two, where were
they? . . . True, there may have
been not only the trumpets and
the solitary trombone "right
enough" under the stage, but also
a bass violin in the box office,
and a harp on the roof. I can
answer only for what I saw and
heard; and I can assure Mr Ger-
man that the Bayreuth device of an
invisible orchestra is also in-
audible on the floor of the Globe.
Nevertheless may be the case upstairs.
But I confess I do not feel
quite at ease concerning the estimate
of "about thirty," made by one
who is in a position to be exact. It
suggests more than twenty-nine
and less than thirty; possibly twenty-
nine and a boy (Vol I, pp 593-94).

It is clear that justice is not the
aim of such criticism, but Shaw's
facetiousness should not obscure the
passion behind the cry: "Who am I
that I should be just?"
"The fact is," Shaw wrote some-
time later, "justice is not the critic's
business; and there is no more dis-
tinct and inalienable affection
in criticism than that impersonal,
abstract, judicially authoritative
abstract." Long before the five-year
period from 1889 to 1894 when he

was to do most of his work as a
music critic, Shaw was already firm
on this point. It appears plainly in a
letter he wrote at the age of twenty-
seven to Francis Hueffer, the music
critic of *The Times*, defending an
article of his on music that Hueffer
hesitated to publish:

But what is it that gives the vitality to
the criticism of Berlioz and Schu-
mann, both of whom you admire? Is
it a conscious (indecomposable word)
calm leading to the conclusion that
there is much to be said on both
sides? . . . For my part, I believe the
ought to be gratified when there is
battle to be done in a good cause. . .
grant you that it is not worthwhile to
fight, that most things, impartially
considered, are as broad as they are
long, but in this spirit is it not still less
worth while to publish a journal? and
criticism is a mere waste of time.

This would appear to suggest that,
for Shaw, the ideal critic was spoiling
for a fight, but it was rather the cou-
pling of his aggressive temperament
with a clear-headed — and just —
evaluation of how little the fight was
worth, "impartially considered", that
made Shaw a magnificent polemicist.
Among polemical writers, W. H.
Auden once wrote, "there are a few
who must be ranked very high by
any literary standard and first among
such I would place Hooker, Swift,
Sydney Smith and Bernard Shaw."

That is very grand company, but it
was not only, or even mainly, be-
cause of his polemical bent, that
Shaw became perhaps the greatest of
all music critics. Now that, all his
journalism on musical subjects (with
one important exception, but includ-
ing more than 125,000 words never
before reprinted) is collected in these
three new volumes, the greatness is
easy to measure: only E. T. A. Hoff-
mann and Berlioz come anywhere near
him, and Berlioz did not write as well.

Shaw's pre-eminence in music criti-
cism (or musical criticism, as he
called it) is only too often explained
simply by his being right where so
many others were wrong. In the in-
troduction to this new edition, the
editor, Dan H. Laurence, after Shaw's
colleague and old enemy, Ernest
Newman, who conceded that "time
has proved the rightness of nine con-
temporary estimates of his out of
ten". It is difficult to give a precise
meaning to this specious assessment.
Unless one holds that a work of
music has an absolute value for all
eternity independent of historical
contingency — something that Shaw
himself would have rejected vigor-
ously — it could signify only that
Shaw was good at predicting the
opinions of the next generation, that
he backed the right horses ninety per
cent of the time.

That is not a very interesting
achievement, nor, in fact, a startlingly
high average: most moderately in-
telligent critics do about as well,
since it is generally fairly obvious
who the important contemporary
composers are early on in their
careers. A blindness in these matters

is almost always wilful, as in Hans-
lick's well-known attacks on Wagner,
and Shaw's on Brahms: the violence
of the attacks, in both cases, is a
tacit admission of the stature of the
composers. In any case, Shaw's criti-
cisms of Parry, Stanford, Gounod
and Saint-Saëns are considerably
milder, more gentlemanly, than his
notorious assaults on the *German
Requiem*. Brahms was the enemy
for Shaw, although he always praised
the G minor piano quartet highly,
perhaps because he heard and liked
it early on in life, before
Brahms had been invested with an
almost mythical status: the figure
that had to be destroyed so that the
progress of dramatic music from
Mozart to Wagner could continue on
into the future. (Later, in the last
edition of *The Perfect Wagnerite*,
Shaw was to claim that "Wagner did
not begin a movement: he consum-

ing to the new mode in which the
tailor measures you round the
chest, in order to get the correct
width for the knee. I am rather an
outsider in these matters, as it is
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clothes last me six years. The re-
sult is that my clothes acquire indi-
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of one of my suits hanging on a
nail, they pull out their penknives
and rush forward, exclaiming
"Good Heavens! he has done it at
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However, the musical critic
presently prevailed over the
clothes philosopher; and I lifted
my gaze to Mr King's face as the
piano began the six-eight rhythm
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horror, he instantly beat time bot-
tomally with his eyes for a whole
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To lovers of poetry the pearl fisher
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ticle three days later (May 21), en-
titled "Bizet Italianized", was even
greater:

To lovers of poetry the pearl fisher
is known as one who "held his
breath, and went all naked to the
hungry shark." To the patrons of
the Opera he is now familiar as an
expensively got-up Oriental, with
an elaborate suit of conduct in
temples not unlike Parthian news-
paper kiosks, the precincts where-
of are laid out, regardless of ex-
pense, in the manner of a Brussels
tea garden. . . . He keeps the hun-
gry shark in order by the prayers
of a virgin priestess, who remains
veiled and secluded from all hu-
man intercourse on a rocky prom-
ontory during the oyster season.

The last sentence, one of the finest
in all of Shaw's works, depends on
the rhythm of the successive clauses
to achieve its culminating bathos.
There is a controlled acceleration,
and the syllabic rhythm goes:
9,9,8,7,8,7. "During the oyster sea-
son" may bring one up short, but it
has been neatly prepared. Shaw him-
self attributed his mastery of style
both to his experience of public
speaking

The end of the affair

By John Weightman

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR:
La Cérémonie des Adieux
suivi de *Entretiens avec Jean-Paul Sartre*
Audi-Septembre 1974
559pp. Paris: Gallimard.

The names of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir have been linked together for so long, and the couple were photographed side by side on so many occasions, that a lot of people still assume them to have been a husband-and-wife team. But readers of *Mme de Beauvoir's* four-volume autobiography know that they were never actually married, he having declared at the outset that he was naturally polygamous. There was an "open" relationship, with other affairs on both sides, but many more, it would seem, on his than on hers. Her account, which breathes a single-minded devotion to him, leaves one with the rather sad impression that she would have been happy, at any point, to become his wife, but that he never went back on his initial resolve.

The same implication is present in *La Cérémonie des adieux*, the story of the last ten years of their almost daily relationship and, in effect, a supplement to the autobiographical volumes. Its authoritative, proprietary tone almost gives it the status of a widow's testament, although the author is an unusual widow, whose revelations and references do not follow any orthodox pattern. The French have an eloquent expression — *une veuve abusive* — for the sort of aggressively conventional widow who throws a blanket of respectability over any significant irregularities in her late husband's thought or behaviour; *Mme de Beauvoir* might be termed "une demi-veuve non abusive".

Although she can hardly have intended this effect, perhaps the most striking feature of her account, even before the description of Sartre's physical and mental decline, is the picture it presents of the anarchist-patriarch in the last decade of his life, surrounded by a bevy of women leading the existence of a dilettante, bourgeois intellectual. There was surprisingly little difference between his lifestyle and that practised, a generation earlier, by the supreme example of the *renétre*, *littérateur*, *André Gide*, except that Gide preferred boys and did not drink. By 1970, the trumpeted doctrine of "commitment" had long since dwindled to moral support for ineffective, left-wing splinter-groups. Sartre remained an inveterate signer of manifestoes, but his energies were largely devoted to his immense book on Flaubert, *L'Idiot de la famille*, and to his personal relationships with the members of his female entourage, most seem to have figured less and less in his life as he grew older, apart from his slight infatuation with the young neo-Marxist, Bénédictine Lévi, who collaborated with him in his last phase, after he had gone blind.

He always maintained a modest flat of his own in the Montparnasse area; but he moved around between the various women, and constantly went on holiday with one or the other, or with more than one, to Italy, and elsewhere. *Mme de Beauvoir* is non-communicative about the exact nature of these relationships. Were *Adieux* (his adopted daughter), Wanda, Michelle, Sylvia, Liliane, Melina, etc., mistresses, extramarital adulteresses, or old men's flirtatious darlings? Did they mind when their number was added to? Had the position of *Mme de Beauvoir* herself now become that of a supportive, commonsensical aide to the senior wife in a harem, and is this why she so often says "we", in associating Sartre with herself? The reader cannot help wondering. Sartre was extraordinarily in many ways, and perhaps not least in his hold over women, who seem almost to have queued up to be with him, and to look after him.

About the decline of old age, *Mme de Beauvoir* is brutally direct.

spoken, and some critics have found this in bad taste. But a personal obsession of hers, and one of the few characteristics she did not borrow from Sartre, is her sense of the pressure of the flesh on the spirit. It is reflected in the titles of two successive volumes of her autobiography — *La Force de l'âge* and *La Force des choses* — depicting triumphant maturity followed by the inevitable backlash, due partly to organic decay through time; it is present as the theme of ageing in the novel, *La Femme rompue*, and it explains the detailed description of her mother's death from cancer in *Une mort très douce*. Whereas Sartre had a religious belief in the autonomy of the spirit, and dogmatically disregarded physiological determinism — even, for instance, to the extent of dismissing Baudelaire's syphilis as a non-significant, anecdotal detail in his book on the poet — she remained acutely aware that the mind is housed in a fragile body.

There is an instructive anecdote in her autobiography about a boat-trip during which she was sea-sick, and Sartre accused her, only half-jokingly, of yielding to bad faith in not asserting her freedom to rise above the sickness. Since she worshipped Sartre as an intelligence, it is understandable that she should have been apprehensive about his psychological state after the age of sixty, and that she should have kept a factual diary of his physical and mental oscillations. She could have refrained from publishing it, of course, but why should she? Everything is grist to the great mill of truth, and the story of how the outstanding apostle of freedom followed the humdrum, carnal *via dolorosa* to extinction has a kind of tragic austerity in her flat, matter-of-fact prose.

Sartre had always had circulation problems, trouble with his eyes and, since early manhood at least, periods of mental disturbance. At one stage, his handwriting deteriorated so badly that, with mesmeric, which may have had permanent effects. He was a heavy smoker, and fond of drink. In his late fifties, while writing *La Critique de la raison dialectique*, he had stuffed himself with the drug corydane in order to maintain an output of ten pages a day. It may appear surprising that so strong a believer in the autonomy of the spirit should have resorted so willingly to physiological stimulants. It is one of which is an admission of the body's basic importance for the mind. But Sartre was never one to worry much about the problem of self-contradiction; and *Mme de Beauvoir* seems to have imposed a measure of sobriety at too late a stage, when the harm was already done.

Even in his early sixties, he had moments of incipient senility, because of faulty blood circulation to parts of the brain. After that, there were minor strokes, teeth infections, diabetes, an almost complete loss of the power to walk, haemorrhages behind the eyes which produced virtual blindness, and recurrent bouts of mild dementia. Sartre wrote all this with relative stoicism, although occasionally into morose and gloomy forecasts of his impending demise. At intervals, he would recover his mental faculties almost completely at other times, when depression hit him; he took to drink and would be found inebriated on the floor of his flat. And — suggestively of all for a committed Marxist — he was afflicted with attacks of incontinence, and *Mme de Beauvoir* had to switch roles, from intellectual companion to geriatric nurse. However, generally speaking, his lapses into senility seem to have been of the euphoric, rather than the frantic kind. During his last weeks in hospital, he had only a vague idea of his surroundings and talked of leaving the place, as if it were a hotel.

All this means that the title, *La Cérémonie des adieux*, is either a misnomer, or bitterly ironic. The expression comes from a 19th-century remark: "Adieu, c'est la cérémonie des adieux?" — that he made to her in the early 1970s, when

they were saying good-bye on one occasion before going off on holiday with different partners. Since he had already been seriously ill, the word *adieux* suddenly took on a sinister meaning for her. But this last decade was in no sense a ceremony, since the term would imply some ordered sequence of gestures with a spiritual or moral significance transcending their literal performance — not, in any case, an easy thing for two Existentialist literature contains so many devastating analyses of the falseness of ceremonies as expressions of phony absolutes. There was not even any deliberate, Heideggerian, "living-towards-death", if that expression can be given a meaning. The story is the average, pathetic, muddled, human saga, in which the ailing partner clings to life as long as possible with the help of the doctors, while the other partner makes the usual reassuring noises.

However, after the death, a kind of rudimentary ceremony occurred spontaneously in the hospital bedroom. *Mme de Beauvoir* and a few friends held a wake around the body, with the help of a bottle of whisky and, towards dawn, — by now a little distraught perhaps — she asked to be left alone for a while to lie down next to the corpse. The gesture was thwarted by a nurse, who was pointed out that Sartre's bed-sheets were gaseous. On this unexpected graphic detail, worthy of the more "realistic" pages of Flaubert, or even Zola, their association came to an end.

In telling the human tale, *Mme de Beauvoir* remains admirably non-sentimental and apparently impartial, but in describing Sartre's intellectual positions during the last decade, she shows herself to be as serenely partisan as ever, disapproving only of his very last enthusiasm, his collaboration with Bénédictine Lévi, whose youthful vitality seems to have dampened Sartre's statements. She accepts without comment the naive, populist anarchism which, as we already know from the last volume of essays, *Situations X*, was Sartre's final political doctrine, and she makes only banal, approving remarks about the three strange volumes of *L'Idiot de la famille*, in which the defects, as well as the virtues, of Sartre's mind are so riotously displayed.

But, if she is unreliable as an intellectual critic of Sartre, she was excellent as a sounding-board against which his ideas and personality could reverberate. The second, and larger, part of the book consists of coherent, fact-recorded, in 1974, after Sartre had become too blind to write, and needed some cheering activity to take his mind off his declining lot. A lot of the material about his childhood, the later phases of his career, his attitudes to literature, politics, women, etc., is far from new, but is repeated with small, and sometimes significant, variations by the *Sartre-specialists* can pounce upon. A few passages show him at the top of his form; others are very dull, or produce new contradictions into a philosophy already bristling with paradox. Although he comes across, in his usual manner, as being overwhelmingly self-confident and sure of himself, except his inner voice, and indeed declares that he was absolutely convinced of his genius from childhood onwards, he also claims, curiously enough, that he doubted himself to overcome an inferiority complex. "Vous n'avez rien dit, un grand moment où vous vous demandiez: 'Qu'est-ce que j'ai fait?'", he says. "Mais, c'est tout simple. C'est que j'ai eu tout seul." Whether true or not; this, at least, is a graceful compliment.

The second volume to appear of the *Œuvres complètes* (188pp. Paris: Gallimard) includes two previously unpublished texts (one dating from 1938 on Marxism and notes for a radio broadcast during thephony war, 1940) articles on *Châtelineau* and *L'Idiot de la famille*, and bibliographical material with particular reference to translations and adaptations of *Le Petit Prince*.



Dressing up for Christmas during the belle époque: two children's fancy-dress outfits from the Grands Magasins de la Ville de Saint-Denis, 1903, both the "Tenue d'officier" (left) and the "Tenue de Zouaves ou de Turcos" retailed at 12.75 to 13.50 francs. The illustration is from Toys, Dolls, Games: Paris 1903-1914, which reproduces in facsimile the Christmas toy catalogues of a number of the great Paris stores (128pp. Denys Ingram. PO Box 287, London N1, 0 900724 00 0).

From the asylum

By Roger Cardinal

ANTONIN ARTAUD:
Œuvres complètes:
Tome XV, Cahiers de Rodez 410pp.
Tome XVI, Cahiers de Rodez 399pp.
Paris: Gallimard

Antonin Artaud had been in hospital at the end of two years when, in February 1945, he began a collection of nonsense crypt jottings in cheap exercise-books. Now that all his published work has been absorbed within the *Œuvres complètes*, Gallimard are embarking on the long task of issuing this unpublished material.

The present two volumes represent the painstaking transcription of sixteen of the so-called *Cahiers de Rodez*. Of ten veering towards illegibility, the manuscript pages are full of misspellings, deletions and erratic punctuation; every last margin and gap has been filled up by Artaud's frenzied scribbles and underlinings (the latter are reproduced here). Such cramping can sensibly be explained by reference to the shortage of writing-paper in occupied France; yet, it seems inevitable that we should associate compression and intensity with what we know of Artaud's morbid state in those years.

The texts bear few titles, and have been assigned a plausible order only by reference to incidental dates or allusions to known events. As a record of Artaud's asylum years, they are utterly unlike a diary, which tends to be characterized by formal dating, a care for the sequence of entries and a consequent air of having been written to be read. Artaud was, admittedly, concerned to safeguard the notebooks on his release from Rodez, yet the texts don't at all read like records which he expected to go over later, re-reading and exploring himself. Rather the writing is compulsive, rudimentary, uncorrected — the imprint of an urgent "one-off" process, an end in itself. These are texts dashed off as other inmates might scratch or whimper: their purpose is to deflect obsessions, to release constricted energies, to fill in the blank space of tedium, to neutralize the discomforts and privations of asylum life.

At times these *Œuvres complètes* are spectacularly glib, with passages of brilliant labelling or fearful moaning interwoven with ritual lists of names (those of local doctors and nurses, of whom one, Adrienne Régis, is mentioned so often as seemingly to have assumed mythic status within Artaud's fantasy), of surrealist friends from the 1920s, and of various minor Catholic

saints. Amid these nominal presences, the writer himself drifts in and out of focus, now assertive, now befuddled and lost. The note of pungent authoritativeness modulates into that of weak-kneed dissolution: "C'est à moi d'être ici présent, à ma volonté que toutes les choses aboutissent." "Je ne suis pas Antonin Artaud (...). Je ne suis jamais né, le corps d'Antonin Artaud vivant n'est qu'une caricature de moi..." Identifying alternately with Christ and Lucifer, Artaud's monologue rotates obsessively around questions of evil, damnation, temptation and chastity. Occasional references to drugs, strait-jackets, exorcism, masturbation and to the ECT treatment Artaud was receiving create a physical context for these ravings.

It is as though a desperate struggle were going on for possession of some essential purity within a dimension of spiritual and physiological anguish. Artaud at times seems to want to rise above his body, racked as it was from drug-abuse and perhaps already affected by that cancer of the soul, which was to kill him within the years. "La douleur vraie est la suppression de l'égo." "Je ne suis pas une douleur, mais moi-même, non moi-même, une volonté qui tarabuste." Blasphemy and perverse distortions of Catholic belief seem intended to exorcise pain, to provoke paroxysms that at once mock and celebrate the Christian equation of physical degradation and spiritual grace: "Dieu est le con de mon anus." "Moi, je BRANLE la croix."

These are grim, lacerated texts, difficult to linger over, littered as they are with those clumps of meaningless syllables affected by the later Artaud, and relieved only by aphorisms that catch the mind as echoes of his earlier stylistic verve. "Le corps pour moi, toujours été un mur entre la conscience et moi." "Je suis une brute affective." "Se désespérer, se masturber avec force et sans abandon, non en étant au mal mais en le faisant venir pour l'assassiner, dans ses délices."

Editorial notes are confined to the material description of the *Œuvres complètes* to pedantic details genealogical and biographical, arising from references to real people. No attempt is made to guide the reader towards an understanding of any typical itineraries on this cross-crisis map of Artaud's devastated mind. One is left with a sense of extreme mental discomfort, occasionally not merely by this lack of orientation but by the suspicion that, in these feverish pages, Artaud was scribbling his way towards defining something, some final experience or vision, to which his words could only allude, fit and starts — something utterly obscure, yet, mysteriously, desperately, sublime.

JOHN HADFIELD (Editor):
The New Shell Guide to England
864pp plus maps. Michael Joseph.
£12.50.
0 7181 2027 2

The New Shell Guide has the double advantage of being remarkably up to date and fairly comprehensive. The nude beach at Brighton, with all the seasonal temptations it may offer, has just made it, so has the hideous Marina. The old Schools at Shrewsbury, at present being shored up, in order to prevent them from tumbling down. Lido, Pride Hill, so we are informed, face an uncertain future, though at least a future. Under Grantham, we read: "Britain's first woman Prime Minister" — and the *Guide* is thick with firsts of one kind or another — "Mrs Margaret Thatcher, was born and educated at Grantham. Her father's grocer's shop still stands at the corner of North Parade and Broad Street." And the *Guide* is being directed primarily at motorists, that is people unable or unwilling to walk (or to waddle) more than a few yards, is equally up to date on the location of the latest car-parks that have, in the past thirty years, contributed so much to the vandalism of our cities, our villages and our beauty spots. There are references to the latest horrors springing up around Manchester's Piccadilly and the process of covering it, and that attractive and walkable city, and that have already obliterated All Saints' Square and Lloyd George's birthplace in Upper Brook Street, and made of much of Oxford Road a tunnel. Almost each item in the *Guide* starts with where to park, though on one or two occasions the visitor is warned that, in order to appreciate such-and-such a place — Berwick-on-Tweed or Frome, for instance — it is necessary actually to get out and walk the streets. The editor and team of contributors are clearly aware that one cannot expect motorists to walk very far.

The *Guide* is comprehensive, but there are a number of places that, for some reason, do not make it. One is a little hurt at the omission of Bromley, the birthplace of H. G. Wells; and, having spent most of my childhood in Tunbridge Wells or bicycling around it, I am surprised that there should be no mention of Bridge or Frant, nor of Bridge Park; nor of such pretty villages as Rotherfield, Miffley, Withyham, Wadhurst. Seaford, where about half the male population of the South-East went to prep school, is out, so is Uckfield, where the other half of the male population of the South-East went to prep school. Crowborough, where I went to prep school, and where Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is buried under the summer-house of his garden overlooking the golf-course and the South Downs, is omitted. Yalding, the lovely Kentish village in which Edmund Blunden was born, is not mentioned. Chichester, one of the few unspoilt spots on the devastated Sussex coast, is rather mercifully left out, presumably because in order to reach it, one has to walk about half a mile: too much for the motorist. Under the tower of its fine church, is not mentioned. In Oxfordshire, we have vain for Exwold and the Tewes, Combe, and the tiny church at Merton on Otmoor. If Hemingford Grey, in what used to be Huntingdonshire, gets in — there is a fine photograph of its riverside church in colour — its twin, almost as attractive and with a much better pub, Hemingford Abbots, is left out. There is a mention of Boxford, which has a fine church and a monument to a lady who lived to the age of 113; nor of Sturton Ho, a minute church on the estuary of the Ouse, facing Maddingtree; nor of the tiny church adjoining a house, on the top of a Dorset hill, at Chilcombe, Hemel Hempstead, near the Cleeve, is passed over. So, most surprisingly, is the beautiful Romano-British church with

magnificent wall-paintings at Kempsey, in the daffodil country near Ledbury. Of course, one cannot expect everything to be in; but some of these omissions seem hard to justify.

Of the places that are in, often important details and hidden treasures are omitted. Firle, in Sussex, the seat of the Gage family, is of course mentioned; but the fact that the village possesses a pure eighteenth-century pub, totally unspoilt and quite unselfconscious — what a contrast to the horrors that have overtaken an inn at Alfriston! — is not. Shrewsbury is adequately covered; but I was sorry to have missed poor Cadman who perished while attempting to cross the Sabrina Stream from the tower of St Mary's — there is a tablet about his sad accident on the wall of the tower. The tiny men-only bar in the Loggerheads, with a print of Disraeli making his maiden speech and his election address on its walls, is not; nor is perhaps it just as well. Nor is another pub in the same town, which has a perfect snug and will be nameless. No mention of that Georgian splendour, Swan Hill House, in Belmont, nor of the beautiful brick gazebo in a garden behind a house in St John's Hill.

The contributors would have done well — as we should do well — to follow the excellent advice given by Sir John Summerson, in his essay on the English townscape: always look at the backs of the houses, because they are often more revealing than the fronts (if applied to the buildings from the Promenade at Blackpool, it will be discovered that many of the more exotic fronts are no more than facades).

Charmouth, on the Dorset coast, is adequately covered; but it is not every churchyard that can boast the elaborate tombstone of a man, a former captain in the Navy, of whom it is stated that he was killed in a duel in August 1793. Is it true that the little church attached to the beautiful estate of Little Bredy, in the same county, is largely Victorian; but attention should be drawn to the tablet on the wall to Mrs Williams, the wife of an MP, who died in the 1840s, and who was the daughter of a French Huguenot from Nîort who came to England as a refugee in 1685, at the age of fourteen. How can anyone write about Manchester without mentioning Sinclair's Oyster Bar, even if it has been moved away from its original location? One of the oddities of Peterborough Cathedral is the portrait of an old seventeenth-century gravedigger who was also the hangman. Princess Victoria may well have stayed at Tunbridge Wells when she was seven; but she spent much longer at the Royal Borough in a grey house just off the top of Mount Slon.

Good guides have negative qualities that are quite as important as

Beauties and barbarities

By Richard Cobb

their positive ones: to warn off as much as to point to. The present guide is rich and, unconsciously, candid in hints of horrors, especially of the sort of horrors that are likely to draw the bored motorist. Of Dymchurch it is observed: "Rather too full of chalets and caravans." So we can give Dymchurch a miss, which is certainly what we can do with Land's End. "A hotel, souvenir shops, snack-bars, hawkers photographers, threadbare, grass networked with paths..."

The West Country seems to have been especially contaminated. Take Tricket St Thomas:

Here creatures like llamas, camels, bison, wapiti, wallabies, flamingos, rheas, black swans, storks, cranes and many breeds of duck co-exist apparently happily and attractively. There is also a zoo, an aviary and a tea-room; and in the afternoon (about 3 pm) visitors are invited to watch part of the estate's dairy herd being milked and make friends with the calves.

Well, we will not be making friends with the calves! Better to give St Just-in-Pennwith a miss: "In the old Court House... a folk-singing group performs in summer..." Fair warning too about Totnes, where there is "quite a colony of neo-craftsmen (pottery, silversmiths, etc.)." But the first prize in such hints of horror must surely go to Darlington Hall: "The place was set up on its present intellectual and highly successful course by Dr and Mrs Leonard K. Elmhirst, the American, idealistic and just come into a fortune, he influenced (among others) by Gandhi..." I love the "among others". Then we hear of the Barn Theatre "where intelligent plays and films are the rule..." (letting one, presumably, "feel the atmosphere" — essentially friendly, it detects here the influence of Mrs Leonard K. Elmhirst, "the window emitting the strains of Brahms, Schubert and Beethoven..." It is an elegant perfect recipe for a couple to make a Radical Match.

But there are broad hints of horrors in other, less afflicted parts of our poor country. Take Belvoir: "Jousting and mock battles are regularly fought in the castle grounds..." Time indeed to dig a great mine. Better keep away from Banbury, at least at the weekend, because of the "endless streams of Sunday motorists". Ample warning too, on the subject of Tipton Tower: "The house, which is unusually well documented and has housed a folk museum in the upper storey since 1952, is well worth visiting..." That is if you are prone to "folk museums". There is a slender bit of advice on the subject of Tatton Park: "The grounds can accommodate huge numbers of visitors, but, if necessary, entrance to the building is regulated so that visitors can proceed

at leisure. There are excellent facilities for the visitor [toilets?]. The Hall and grounds were both opened to the public in 1962, and by 1967 the millionth visitor had passed through. There are sailing, fishing, riding, nature trails, and a deer park..." There is an admirable, and apparently unconscious, contradiction on the subject of Wallasey: "Wide stretches of sand continue to the borough boundary at HOVLAKE. These are used for motor-cycle races in spring and autumn..." With the sandhill and Moreton Common, the beach provokes nearly 3m. of unspoiled coastline. This is an unusually honest guide because it makes no attempt to conceal what one is in for.

The *Guide* also contains a jumble of bizarre pieces of information about oddities, follies and coccinillas, as well as a number of quite perceptive historical comments. I did not know that the Dome, opposite the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, was modelled on the "Halle au Bled" in Paris, nor that the same seaside resort has a museum housing over 3,000 stuffed birds. Most people will have walked along the concrete undercliff from Brighton to Rottingdean, but few are likely to know that most of it was built in the 1930s by unemployed Welsh miners. Any commuter from Cannon Street or Charing Cross would have heard of the Chislehurst Caves, but most would have forgotten that during the Second World War they were used as vast air-raid shelters. It is news to me that the marble plinth of the statue of Winston Churchill in Westerham was given by Tito and the people of Yugoslavia. I now know that Southampton is unique in having four tides a day and that this is why it was chosen as a transatlantic port. I can recall from childhood that it was dangerous to live on the East Coast during the First World War and that an ammunition dump on Walton pier blew up in 1918; but the *Guide* informs me that the remains of Whitby Abbey were demolished in a bombardment by the German Grand Fleet and that in Hartlepool over a hundred people were killed in a similar bombardment in 1914.

When I was a schoolboy, I often had my top hat and myself stoned on Sundays by the younger members of the proletariat of Meole Brace; but it never then occurred to me that the Victorian parish church — there was also a Catholic one, catering, it was said, for the local Irish — of that unpleasant village had windows by Burne-Jones and William Morris. On the other hand, I was slightly surprised to read, under CAMBRIDGE, the claim that "its bookshops are among the finest in the country..." Why then do so many of my Cambridge friends come to Oxford to buy books at Blackwell's or Parker's? Still on the subject of the same town, Lord Dacre, the master of "the ancient College, would be surprised to find it described as 'Peterhouse College'." I have often passed through Wolverhampton, a town between Oxford and Bedford that I have always described as "Magritteville", because its long workshops seem to represent a vast exercise in visual perspective; I have speculated on the origin of the inn-sign there, the Cuba Army, and have long regarded the toy soldier on the war memorial, described as "almost without rival, even among fellow resorts", as a variety and the inmoderate of its Victorian architecture. There is a perceptive comment on the rather dreary town of Reading (that has now spread almost to the once-pretty village of Theale) as a place that, though on the Thames, seems oddly uninvolved with the river. I like, too, the description, in the introductory essay entitled "The English Village", of "Rowland Hilder's, of outstanding and eloquent misfortune: Ogle, the inventor of the reaping machine, was born there in 1765; dying in Alnwick workhouse in 1848. Was he drunk or gambling, or was he cheated out of his invention? There are, just the two stark facts. In the village of Heddon-

on-the-Wall, the cottages that had been originally built to house the local mining community, but had never been inhabited by the miners, were allotted by the Government, in 1796, to French émigré priests: hence the name Frenchman's Row. I have seen the iron-ore trains climbing up from Stanley to Consett, but only the *Guide* has told me that the first Salvation Army band in the world was organized in the latter place. It would certainly have tickled my old friend, Jack Gallagher, a proud native of the place and a brilliant pupil at its Academy, that the Boy Scout Movement began in Birkenhead in 1908. The churchyard who died in 1732, aged ninety-five, the father or the grandfather of ninety-four children. A pity that he remained one short. In the churchyard of Hale, not so far away, there is the headstone of the Child of Hale, who was over nine foot tall.

Some of the local historical information is very surprising. For instance, that Blackpool is so old it was already popular locally by 1730; by 1788, it had over fifty houses and four hundred visitors from Manchester at the height of the season. Southampton too got off to an early start; its first house being built in 1792. Margaret had a visit from George III, while the West Country seaside resorts owed their original prosperity to the long period of the Napoleonic Wars, years during which fashionable people were unable to go abroad. The Laver at Dawlish was laid out in 1803, significantly just after the resumption of war, following the collapse of the Peace of Amiens. During the same period Torquay became the favourite resort of the wives of naval officers whose warships were anchored for long periods in Torbay. In this part of the world there were other indirect consequences of outside events: Dartmoor prisons at Princetown were built largely by and for French prisoners of war. Under PLYMOUTH there is an elusive comment: "H. M. Dockyard, containing much of naval, architectural and macabre interest... can at times be visited if you are British..." What macabre matters have to be hidden from all but British eyes? Having never been anywhere near Plymouth, I do not know the answer to this interesting question.

Of course there is no reason why the authors of guidebooks should not make judgements. One would not expect them to claim that Wolverton was a handsome place. Still, I was hurt to see poor Newhaven, a very useful port and much the most agreeable gateway to France (it leads to attractive and lively Dieppe) described as "a town of no particular interest in itself". The King of the French, Louis-Philippe, spent his last night of exile there. In the pretty Bridge Hotel, before moving to Eastbourne, where very suitably for *Le Roi Bourgeois*, he eventually died (a fact that the *Guide* fails to record; nor does it mention another celebrated inhabitant of that comfortable resort, Dr Bodkin Adams, whose enormous red-brick and many-gabled house dominates the steep cliff road at the western end of the Promenade). Ifracombe, another resort that got its head start as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, is described as "almost without rival, even among fellow resorts", as a variety and the inmoderate of its Victorian architecture. There is a perceptive comment on the rather dreary town of Reading (that has now spread almost to the once-pretty village of Theale) as a place that, though on the Thames, seems oddly uninvolved with the river. I like, too, the description, in the introductory essay entitled "The English Village", of "Rowland Hilder's, of outstanding and eloquent misfortune: Ogle, the inventor of the reaping machine, was born there in 1765; dying in Alnwick workhouse in 1848. Was he drunk or gambling, or was he cheated out of his invention? There are, just the two stark facts. In the village of Heddon-

Nativity

If there is a prince in this picture
It is the child in the arms of its mother,
Simple and naked with power.

The kings know this and kneel,
Bestowing their glamour,
Breathless with knowledge.

Behind the dawn and a smell of honey:
Little farms, towers,
An artefact of country.

A fable that wanders
Through olive and vine,
An earth that is pale and then tawny.

Sun breaks in the hills and, startled, the light
Runs like a lizard to the sky.
The mother stares at God,
She does not know she is smiling.

Patrick Cullinan

less of all our decades". The 1930s may have accelerated ribbon development and multiplied unlovely council estates; but they were not responsible for motorways and multi-storey car-parks. The real vandalism belongs to the Fifties, a decade on the course of which the once beautiful town of Colchester was torn apart. As for the beautiful gardens of Sissinghurst Castle, the joint work of Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West, there is a certain wryness in the comment: "... he designing and she planting in a supremely happy partnership. Naturally, I was deeply gratified to see my birthplace. Printon-on-Sea, rightly described as "a select seaside resort". Long may it remain so.

The authors do not miss much. Here is the old, familiar fly on the window of Bucklebury church, here are the pathetic graffiti in dog Latin, on the subject of the Black Death, inside the tower of the beautiful church of Ashwell. Here are the Culpepers, lined up in diminishing size, boys on the left, girls on the right, in the parish church of Goudhurst. Here is Lady Grandison, in stone, and Sir John Kyrle, in wood, in the church of Much Marcle. Here, in the churchyard of Moreton Corbet, adjoining the ruined manor-house, is the bronze sculpture in memory of thirteen-year-old Vincent Corbet, who died at Eton in 1904, perhaps the last of his line. The contributors, no doubt counselled by Ronald Blythe, who has written a superb introduction to the section on East Anglia - it is perhaps easier to write

well about the most beautiful part of England; how difficult it would be to write well about the dreary, dark and sinister villages of the Cotswolds! - have even found their way to the little church of Copford, though they do not mention the skin, under glass, of a blaspheming Dane, presented to the church by one of my eighteenth-century ancestors, Nathaniel Cobb.

The *Guide*, despite a few notable omissions, is nearly always good on churches, especially those in unlikely places, down footpaths, through farmyards, adjoining ruined palaces, even if it means the motorist actually having to walk twenty or thirty yards (unfortunately he does not have to walk more than a few steps to reach the once-lovely Trout Inn at Wolvercote, there is a huge car-park just opposite). Tombs and tablets are minutely recorded, as well as pews, pulpits, fonts, roofs; local building materials are pointed out; the size of churches is related to periods of great prosperity, whether in East Anglia or West Country; the fortified churches of the Scottish and Welsh Marches are listed. There is even a section, rather incongruously in a *Guide* to England, on Cornish towns, ports, churches and villages.

Of the introductory essays, my favourite is the one devoted to folk-art grotesques, along with resident hermits, false ruins, and topiary, by the late Barbara Jones. We encounter the happy resident hermit of Tong. But, she adds, "there are many records of early failure - the

hermit went away, or he was found drinking in the village and dismissed". The hermit boom belongs to the eighteenth century; but there was a brief revival in the 1920s, especially among former officers who had served on the Western Front. In and around Tunbridge Wells, in the mid-Twenties, there were still five hermits: one, a killed Scot (who had nothing on under his kiln), camped on the Common; schoolboys were warned against him, but he was quite harmless. Another, before 1914 a keen cricketer, lived in a tent near the Hawkenbury Corner (on ground now occupied by the Ministry of Pensions); he still maintained the rather bedraggled uniform of his pre-war enthusiasms, wearing a very old pair of white trousers that were going green and grey, rotting tennis shoes, and an unidentifiable blazer, and he carried his spartan shopping from the store in Hawkenbury in an old cricket-bag designed for pads. He talked to himself, rather loudly, about pre-war county matches. He was said to be self-sufficient. There was a third living in an elaborate wooden structure, in the woods between Tunbridge Wells and Speldhurst. A fourth actually lived in a cave, conforming to eighteenth-century requirements, in the Happy Valley, beyond Rushall church. During the same period, there were two permanent hermits on Port Meadow, north of Oxford. The hermit's life, like chicken-farming, seems to have provided one of the refuges for the human wreckage caused by the First World War. I am sure there were many more hermits, living in deep

woodland, or on commons on the fringes of towns, throughout the 1920s. Perhaps a social historian might be induced to map out this sad jettison of the Western Front. A last word on topiary is provided at the end of Barbara Jones's essay: "... there is a more recent one in Wolverhampton that has privet topiary of 16 Scotch terriers, two cats and a rat. ... So follies are not just a Gallic speciality, and the *facteur* Cheval seems to have had many English artisanal counterparts.

All the authors complain, rightly, about the idiocies and horrors of the new county boundaries, none more than Peter Fleetwood-Hesketh, who has had to cope with the inanity of the North-West. But even the *Guide* has some bizarre groupings: Essex, in East Anglia; yes, at a pinch, one would like to be an East Anglian. The South-East presents no problems. But why should Dorset be in the South, when, surely, it would be happier with the West. But the real trouble starts with the jumble called the North Midlands that puts poor Shropshire in the strange company of Lincs, Leics, Notts, Derbyshire. What do Salop and Lincs have in common? Or is it merely a matter of how far up one is? In another unhappy jumble, Bucks becomes separated from its natural twin, Oxon, ending up in the company of Beds, Herts, and Northants. Herts certainly is a problem, rather like Surrey; it is a vague area through which one passes, on the happy journey east (in England, happiness comes in the exact reverse to the mood of Russian travellers as described by

Custine in *Un voyage en Russie en 1849*, after a conversation with an East Prussian publican on the border: "When they are travelling west, they are happy and gay, when they are travelling east, they are gloomy and uncommunicative") on the Oxford-to-Cambridge bus: Luton, Hitchin, Letchworth. Where do they belong? By Royston, however, the landscape improves, it is already home territory. Of course, all groupings must be fairly arbitrary. Both Romney Marsh and Otmoor would seem to be more at home in the Fens, and the lovely Clun country hovers mysteriously between south Shropshire, Herefordshire, and Wales. Avon, Humberside, Cambridgeshire, as well as being in the Fens, is also in the Midlands, and to the unfortunate inhabitants who have to live in such places. We have been almost as silly as the French: Seine-Inférieure, Loire-Inférieure, Charente-Inférieure, Basses-Alpes, Basses-Pyrénées, all have had to go. At least in this country, as there is nothing very high, there is no disgrace in being rather low. Having no aspiring mountains, we make do very well with hills. One of the authors proposes, as the most beautiful hill in England, Breton. I would opt for Caer Caradoc, in the Strettons. It is all a matter of taste.

Even if aimed primarily at motorists, that is to say at people who will make our countryside and our towns even worse than they are already, this is still a very serviceable guide. It may even induce people to walk, in the exact reverse to the mood of Russian travellers as described by

POLITICAL HISTORY

PAUL HOLLANDER:

Political Pilgrims
Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba 1928-1978
524pp. Oxford University Press. £15.
0 19 502937 2

In our time politics has increasingly become the pursuit of religion by other means. The key to the twentieth century - not least to its horrors - is to study what happens in practice when this transformation takes place. Paul Hollander, in this illuminating survey of left-wing pilgrimages to such shrines as Stalin's Russia, Mao's China, Castro's Cuba and Ho's Vietnam, assumes that the intellectuals who mainly composed them were the heirs to the early agnostics. I rather doubt that. Intellectuals, especially those who think of themselves as such, are usually born to believe, gregarious and, within their group, highly conformist. What they believe will be what it is socially permissible to believe, at any one time, in the congregation to which they belong. At *Les Temps Modernes* Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, for instance, ran an authoritarian mixed monastery, and when a monk stepped out of line, as Albert Camus did, the ferocity with which he was assailed had all the characteristics of odium theologicum. The credulity of a group of intellectuals, especially on pilgrimage, is far greater than that of one on his or her own - a reason why totalitarian states prefer to lump them into parties. And the fact that intellectuals agree - even wish - to travel in this degrading manner indicates an initial prejudice in favour of deception.

The truth is, pilgrims, religious or secular, demand prodigies. Hollander quotes Jonathan Mirsky, a pilgrim to China in 1972, writing in 1978, after faith had fled: "Throughout our trip the most striking feature of the country was the sheathed critical faculties which had been directed at our own government, and... humbly helped to insert the rings in our own noses." A Chinese guide admitted the same year: "We wanted to be deceived. But you, who were to be deceived. If there is no God, and no Heaven to come, the need for some kind of millennium on earth does not diminish; on the contrary, as Norman Cohn put it: 'A world purified of all evil and in which history is to find its consummation - these ancient imaginings are with us still.' Intellectuals tend to be better at deceiving themselves than most people; they have the imagination for making that 'willing suspension of disbelief' which the perception of Utopia like poetry, requires. And, as Saul Bellow put it, 'A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep'."

The first great age of political pilgrimage was the early 1930s, at a time when Stalin's forced collectivization of the peasants was killing five million of them and hustling ten million more into the camps. As Hollander shows, the pilgrims had no difficulty in ignoring or justifying all that. One of Stalin's "achievements" was the White Sea Canal, built by 300,000 slave-labourers, and later harrowingly described by Solzhenitsyn. Amabel Williams-Ellis, in an introduction to a book on the project published in 1934, enthused: "This is the labour camp, a high reputation throughout the Soviet Union as places where tens of thousands of men have been reclaimed." "So well known and effective is the Soviet method of remaking human beings," she added, "that criminals occasionally now apply to be readmitted." Harold Laski praised Soviet prisons for enabling convicts to live "to full and self-respecting life". Whereas in Britain, said Shaw, a man entered prison a human being and emerged a criminal type, in Russia he entered "as a criminal type and would come out an ordinary man but for the difficulty of inducing him to come out at all. As far as I could make out they could stay as long as they liked."

A touch of cynicism in the last sentence? One is never sure with Shaw. He knew about the murders. His fellow-pilgrim, Lady Astor, chided Stalin: "How long are you going to go on killing people?" but when he replied as long as necessary, she changed the subject and asked him to read the Russian nanny for her children. Defending Stalin, Shaw argued: "We cannot afford to give ourselves moral airs when our most enterprising neighbour... humanely and judiciously liquidates a handful of exploiters and speculators to make the world safe for honest men." He thought Stalin had "delivered the goods" and "I take off my hat accordingly". H. G. Wells said he had "never met a man more candid, fair and honest... no one is afraid of him and everybody trusts him". The Webbs insisted he had less power than an American president, merely acting on the orders of the Central Committee and the Presidium. Hewlett Johnson found him "a man of kindly gentility" who was leading "his people down new and unfamiliar avenues of democracy". J. D. Bernal paid tribute to his "deeply scientific approach to all problems" and his "capacity for feeling". "A good natured man of principle," said the Chilean writer Pablo Neruda. "A man to whose care I would readily confide the education of my children", pronounced the biographer Emil Ludwig. "His brown eye is exceedingly wise and gentle", reported the American ambassador Joseph Davies. "A child would like to sit on his lap and a dog would slide up to him."

Hollander, who has collected many such gems, shows that the unmasking of Stalin even by his former colleagues did not persuade the intellectuals of the 1930s, who flocked to Havana and Peking, to be a little more cautious. Hewlett Johnson popped up again to find in Mao's face "something no picture had ever caught, an inexpressible look of kindness and sympathy". He had, Han Suyin wrote, "an ever-present concern for the practical application of democracy". Striking an unusually open religious note, Orville Schell wrote that the Chinese had absorbed the thoughts of the Chairman until "the word almost literally became flesh" and he had "almost become transubstantiated in his people". Norman Mailer thought Castro "the first and greatest hero to appear in the world since the Second War". It was "as if the ghost of Cortez had appeared in our century riding Zapata's white horse". Sartre, too, found Castro a superman who could do without meals or sleep: "Of all these night-watchmen, Castro is the most awake. Of all these fasting people, Castro can eat the most and fast the longest. [They] exercise a veritable dictatorship over their own needs... they roll back the limits of the possible." When Castro stands erect, wrote Abbie Hoffman, "He is like a mighty penis coming to life, and when he is tall and straight the crowd immediately is transformed."

The ability to accept miracles, the willingness to justify persecution, the appetite for hagiography, are religious attributes. "He who is not with us is against us", wrote St Paul, to be echoed by Eldridge Cleaver in a menacing *mot* to his fellow intellectuals: "If you are not a part of the solution you are a part of the problem." Isaiah Berlin has noted that the quest for Utopia is a search for wholeness, "the conviction that all the positive values in which men have believed must, in the end, be compatible, and perhaps even entail one another." It is striking how often the word "whole-

Remembered residences

By E. S. Turner

CAROLINE DAKERS:

The Blue Plaque Guide to London
318pp. Macmillan. £7.95.
0 355 28462 3

It was William Ewart, the MP responsible for persuading Parliament to abolish hanging in chains and to introduce free public libraries, who first proposed commemorating the houses of the famous in London. In response the Royal Society of Arts began putting up chocolate-coloured plaques, of which a few survive. A generation later the Earl of Rosebery, first chairman of the London County Council, urged that the task be taken over by that body (now the GLC). Suitably, the homes of both men are marked by plaques.

The chocolate shade has long given way to the familiar blue. There are, however, a good many unofficial, or "rogue" plaques, though rogue seems a hard word for tributes put up by such blameless bodies as the South London Immortals Club (remembering Browning), the London Hellenic Society (Cavafy), La Société d'Etudes Stelliennes (Madame de Staël) and the Czechoslovakia Colony (Másky).

Caroline Dakers lists both official and rogue plaques in her welcome and authoritative guide, a work embellished by fifty full-page elegant line drawings by herself. As a record of what a man, or woman, must do to achieve this sort of immortality, it will inspire the same mixture of pleasure, wonder and bafflement that people derive from studying the Honours Lists.

Among the GLC requirements for a blue plaque are that a person should be regarded as eminent in his sphere by a majority of members of his calling; that he should have made some important positive contribution to human welfare or happiness; that his name should be known to the well-informed passer-by; that his work should "deserve recognition"; and that he should have been dead for twenty years or have passed his hundredth birthday. Evidently not all these requirements are enforced. The members of the GLC Historical Buildings Advisory Committee must, things related themselves whether Sir Isaac Newton, inventor of the machine-gun, had been buried in a positive sense to

human welfare and happiness; how the debate went we shall never know. Perhaps it was enough that Maxim was esteemed by members of his profession and that, scientifically speaking, he deserved recognition.

We are on tricky ground here. On a red-brick house in Ealing is another GLC plaque to Alan Bower Blumlein, "electronics engineer and inventor". Bower Blumlein was a leading member of the Home Office's Bomber Command's attacks on German industry (he was killed in a Halifax bomber in 1942). If we welcome his invention in war we must honour him in peace; otherwise, we have no right to honour generals or admirals.

What about the contributions to human welfare and happiness by Marx and Lenin? We are told that the first two plaques to Marx, in the 1930s, were smashed, though the present one on a restaurant in Dean Street, Soho, seems reasonably safe. A proposed Lenin plaque was refused by the owner of a house which had become a vicarage; but Lenin has a privately erected plaque on a hotel in King's Cross Road, commemorating his days at Percy Circus, now no more.

Perhaps the services of a lady of pleasure are entitled to recognition? There is a plaque in South Street, Mayfair, to "Sklitless", described as the last Victorian courtesan, but this book does not tell us who erected it (inspector, perhaps). It is to be blue and circular but to lack the GLC imprint. One could argue that the lady's contribution to human welfare and happiness was probably exceeded by the welfare and happiness bestowed on her by her patrons, notably Harry and the Duke of Devonshire. Did any courtesan go into these aspects? Every such body has its moralist, and there may be there were those who objected to the blue plaque for Donald McGill, demurely described as a "postcard cartoonist".

The passer-by would need to be exceptionally well-informed to be able to place some of the 600-odd residents listed in these plaques. Names like Roy Barbosa, Donat Obedovich, and Charles Edmund Pezzenik, jostle with those of Voltaire, Metternich, Talleyrand, Freud and Gandhi. In all but a couple of entries, the compiler gives us useful, and sometimes sprightly, amplifying information. Oddly, that the inventor of the machine-gun, had been buried in a positive sense to

The requirement that a resident should be twenty years deceased is not over-strictly observed. Joseph Chamberlain won his plaque the year after his death and Lord Morrison after twelve years (the GLC looks after its own). E. M. Forster, who died in 1970, is down for a GLC plaque in Turnham Green "c. 1981", but it is not yet in place. The tablet on Kennington Road was put up by the Vauxhall Society. Lord Brockway is possibly unique in having a plaque on one of his homes while still living (one excepts Lord Onslow in Greek Street); he was honoured by the Borough of Islington, which makes its own rules.

Most plaques stick to the bare facts, which seems sensible, but there are exceptions. Bernard Shaw's tablet in Fitzroy Square proclaims: "From the coffers of his genius he enriched the world." Edgar Wallace's formal blue plaque in Tresseltown Crescent avoids the sentimental grandiloquence of the "privately erected plaque in Ludgate Circus (who were the king he walked with)". De Gaulle's wartime headquarters in Carlton Gardens bears a private plaque which quotes from his great rallying call to Frenchmen; and said it is that the French text reproduced here contains several errors.

De Gaulle is a reminder that the suburbs of London have their claims to memorials too. There is a house in Birchwood Road, Petts Wood (not mentioned in this book) which was de Gaulle's first home in Britain, in 1940. Did he, one wonders, travel up to London on the Southern Electric, with all those commuters and haranguing Churchills? Some are told that plaques are springing up in the most unprosperous "sems" in suburbia, but there is clearly room for many more. "Siton, Redbridge, Merton, Hounslow, Bellingham, Brent and Beiley" are the names of the plaques; Barking, Enfield, Havering, Haringey, Kingston, Newham and Waltham Forest have none.

From the introduction we learn that the GLC committee should have been asked (though a "Lord Lucan" lived in Belgium in Belgium was probably related by name), but the music-hall artist Arthur Lucan, famous for his rumbustious "Sold Mother Riley". Despite accusations of carrying favour with the masses, quite a string of old-time variety stars have now received their plaques. In due course there will be

objections to remembering pop stars (Tommy Steele's mansion on that busy corner in Ham is just made for a blue plaque). Still in the popular field, the GLC honoured Bram Stoker, creator of Count Dracula, but Mary Shelley, creator of Frankenstein, posed a problem; the clerical occupants of her one-time home in Chester Square objected to mention of the creature and the Council withdrew, leaving the field to the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association. As with the Lenin plaque, it is a reminder that the feelings of occupants have to be considered. Some householders object to tablets of any description, not wishing to have people gazing up at their dwellings.

Should mothers of the famous be honoured? The GLC seems ready to leave such recognition to others. Susanna Annesley, mother of John Wesley, earns a sign from the City of London at Spitalyard, Bishopsgate. In the Vale of Health, Hampstead, a plaque is proposed by the Hampstead Plaque Fund, as the home of Alfred and Geraldine Harnsworth, parents of that sumptuous brood, Lord Northcliffe, Lord Rothschild, Lord Harnsworth, Sir Leicester and Sir Hildebrand Harnsworth.

Some illustrious residents have more than one plaque. Dr Johnson, Coleridge, Thomas Hood and George Orwell have three; Keats, Turner and Disraeli four; Charles Lamb five and Dickens seven. Among the most distinguished addresses, as one would expect, are Cheyne Walk, Bedford Square and the Vale of Health. No 10 St James's Square achieves some sort of record through having housed three Prime Ministers: Chatham, Derby and Gladstone.

Notoriously the presence of a blue plaque is no obstacle to the demolition of a house; rather it is seen by developers as a challenge. In central London there is an ever-growing number of plaques reading "In a house on this site...". Unless the well-informed passer-by can see the original edifice, much of the fun goes out of the spotting game.

The notes furnished by Caroline Dakers offer a useful stimulus to the imagination. Frequently she quotes from a contemporary description of the interior of a house. So, we can picture Cardinal Manning in the littered gloom of 22 Carlisle Place, in a low armchair, his faded red skullcap cocked over one eyebrow, and the only object of pety his favourite malachite crucifix. Or we can look at

16 Cheyne Walk and try to picture Meredith shying away from the sight of Rossetti's uneaten breakfast, "the eggs which had bled slowly to death on slabs of coagulate bacon". Or, better still, we can stand outside "The Pines", on Putney Hill, thinking of Swinburne sliding down the banisters, "an act followed by the exquisite pleasure of Wells-Dunlop removing the splinters" (the exact reverse of the case of the casual grow, leaving the field to the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association).

The book is a treasure-box of odd characters and odd institutions. In Camden Square lived the founder of the British Rainfall Association, George James Symons, who kept an unbroken record of the weather in his home for forty-two years and built up a network of over 3,000 rain-watches. In Hertford Street, Mayfair, lived Sir George Cayley, a pioneer of aviation who "in 1832 or 1833 built the first successful self-carrying glider, which carried his coachman in the air for short distances". Sir Jonathan Hutchinson, surgeon, scientist and teacher, of Cavendish Square, was "reported to have seen over a million cases of syphilis".

It could be argued that too many minor painters have been commemorated. Their ranks include Richard Dadd, who murdered his father and was one of Broadmoor's first inmates; and Alfred Stevens, who, after making forgeries for dealers in Florence, graduated to constructing exhibits for the Great Exhibition of 1851, and designed the Wellington Memorial in St Paul's.

If some lesser achievers earn posthumous honour, at least nobody gets a plaque by virtue of having borne a title or owned enormous wealth. In the spirit of noblesse oblige the Duke of Bedford, who built Bloomsbury, and the Duke of Wellington, who built Belgrave, are much of Mayfair, at one erected plaques to their more distinguished residents, but no dukes themselves seem to have been honoured (the index refers to an entry for a Duke of Westminster on page 290, but he seems to have given an author and publisher the slip). A case could be made out for recognizing the Duke of Sutherland who built what is now Lancaster House, the scene of "Summertime". It seems unlikely that we shall ever see a blue circle on Buckingham Palace saying: "In a palace on this site lived John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham and Normanby, Dilettante, Footcoster and Re-Writer of Shakespeare."

Through pink-coloured spectacles

By Paul Johnson

minerals occasionally now apply to be readmitted."

such gems, shows that the unmasking of Stalin even by his former colleagues did not persuade the intellectuals of the 1930s, who flocked to Havana and Peking, to be a little more cautious. Hewlett Johnson popped up again to find in Mao's face "something no picture had ever caught, an inexpressible look of kindness and sympathy". He had, Han Suyin wrote, "an ever-present concern for the practical application of democracy". Striking an unusually open religious note, Orville Schell wrote that the Chinese had absorbed the thoughts of the Chairman until "the word almost literally became flesh" and he had "almost become transubstantiated in his people". Norman Mailer thought Castro "the first and greatest hero to appear in the world since the Second War". It was "as if the ghost of Cortez had appeared in our century riding Zapata's white horse". Sartre, too, found Castro a superman who could do without meals or sleep: "Of all these night-watchmen, Castro is the most awake. Of all these fasting people, Castro can eat the most and fast the longest. [They] exercise a veritable dictatorship over their own needs... they roll back the limits of the possible." When Castro stands erect, wrote Abbie Hoffman, "He is like a mighty penis coming to life, and when he is tall and straight the crowd immediately is transformed."

The ability to accept miracles, the willingness to justify persecution, the appetite for hagiography, are religious attributes. "He who is not with us is against us", wrote St Paul, to be echoed by Eldridge Cleaver in a menacing *mot* to his fellow intellectuals: "If you are not a part of the solution you are a part of the problem." Isaiah Berlin has noted that the quest for Utopia is a search for wholeness, "the conviction that all the positive values in which men have believed must, in the end, be compatible, and perhaps even entail one another." It is striking how often the word "whole-

ness" is used by political pilgrims to describe the societies they found in Russia, China, Cuba and Vietnam. Susan Sontag rejoiced that "the Vietnamese are 'whole' human beings, not 'split' as we are". She found the same thing in Cuba: "The Cubans know a lot about spontaneity, gaiety, sensuality and freaking out. They are not linear, desecrated creatures of print-culture."

As with religion, what the eye "sees" reflects the inner faith, rather than the actual object perceived. Sometimes the coming of the new vision is almost a physical event, as it was with St Paul at Damascus. Hollander quotes Angela Davis: "The Communist Manifesto hit me like a bolt of lightning. ... Like an expert surgeon, this document cut away catarracts from my eyes." After wards, things look different, and that is why a pilgrimage is a voyage of marvellous discoveries, where familiar objects acquire a new significance. Eugene Lyons wrote of Russia in 1928: "Elsewhere, dinginess might be depressing. Here it seemed to us romantically proletarian." "Exhaustion, vermin, dysentery were birth-pangs to joy", said Anna Louise Strong. Contemplating a perfectly ordinary Russian train, Waldo Frank found "There is something about a Russian train standing at a station that thrills. The little locomotive is human." A Brooklyn lady, taken round a Moscow printing-works, complained that such marvellous machinery did not exist in America, only to find that it had been made in Brooklyn. Hewlett Johnson rejoiced at China's "new codes of honour", citing the fact that newsstands were unattended, purchasers dropping their money in boxes - something he could have seen all over London.

There is an element of almost conscious self-deception in this double vision. Simone de Beauvoir argued that it was morally acceptable for pedicabs to be found in socialist China: since the task performed was useful to

Night: or, What You Will

(For printing the following piece some reason should be given, as not one word of it is original. ... This practice, in which the author sometimes indulges, of linking together, in his own mind, favourite passages from different authors, seems in itself unobjectionable; but as the publishing such compilations might lead to confusion in literature, he should deem himself inexcusable in giving this specimen, were it not from a hope that it might open to others a harmless source of private gratification.)

Now sleeps the crimson petal; now the white
In summer's twilight weeps itself away;
Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight -
Fields where soft sleeping from cages pull the hay,
Green cowbills, and the moonlight-coloured may,
A formless grey confusion covers all.
Along the wide canals the zephyrs play:
The woods decay, the woods decay and fall.

The west unflashes. The high stars grow bright
Far as the solar-walk, or Milky-way.
What glowing hues of mingled shade and light!
In me thou seest the twilight of such day,
The hills and rocks attend; my doleful lay
In this sad night is piercing like the squall.
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's holiday.
The woods decay, the woods decay and fall.

O, blame me not, if I no more can write
Earth shakes her nodding towers, the ground gives way;
For all that move doth in change delight.
Impetuous Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Keeps his pale coat in beauty and decay.
Like Nelson, Harold, Hector, Cyrus, Saul,
And when Fate summons, monarchs must obey.
The woods decay, the woods decay and fall.

As in those domes where Caesars once bore sway,
See the fierce Visigoths on Spain and Gaul
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage - what are they?
The woods decay, the woods decay and fall.

(NOTE: I have considered the punctuation as wholly in my power.)

Philip Drew

A key to the source of the lines of this poem will be found on p. 1496 of this issue.

TLS

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society it ceased to be degrading. A gruesome calling themselves Concerned Asian Scholars asked an old woman whose job it was to remove slivers of metal from oily rags, and whose hands were covered in cuts, whether she felt any pain, and reported her answer: "When you are working for the revolution, it doesn't hurt." Sontag and others accepted without question claims that in Cuba people did without sleep and worked a 24-hour day. Angela Davis primly noted that in Cuba "The job of cutting cane had become qualitatively different since the revolution". At the height of the 1932 famine, Julian Huxley thought the Russians looked bigger and healthier than the British. It is astonishing what a lot of political pilgrims read into people's faces. "A purposeful look" was their favourite expression for describing the 1930s Russian. Of Stalinist children Leon Feuchtwanger wrote: "With what calm confidence do they face life, feeling that they are organic parts of a purposeful whole." The word generally used for the North Vietnamese was "gentle"; for the Cubans "energetic". "Perhaps the first thing a visitor to Cuba notices is the enormous energy level" - Sontag again. Sometimes there is even rural self-delusion. At Peking airport, Tom Hayden heard the nanny not only boom, but boom with conviction. Needless to say he found "everywhere" the "pulse of purposeful activity".

A pilgrimage is not merely to contemplate the numinous but to stone for sin. For American intellectuals, with whom Hollander is principally concerned, purging of guilt is one of the chief aims of the voyage. The admissions of guilt have a quasi-liturgical form, recalling the penitential psalms. He quotes an advertisement by intellectuals in the *New York Times*: "We, the American people - We: Affluent, corrupt, dehumanized, brutalized, chauvinistic, racist, white America - who share guilt for US police and the atrocities." Members of the Yonkers Brigade, who went to Cuba to stone for American wickedness, were (one of them wrote) "paralysed with shame and despair over the values which a competitive, individualistic and racist middle class culture had instilled in them". Her account has a memorable passage:

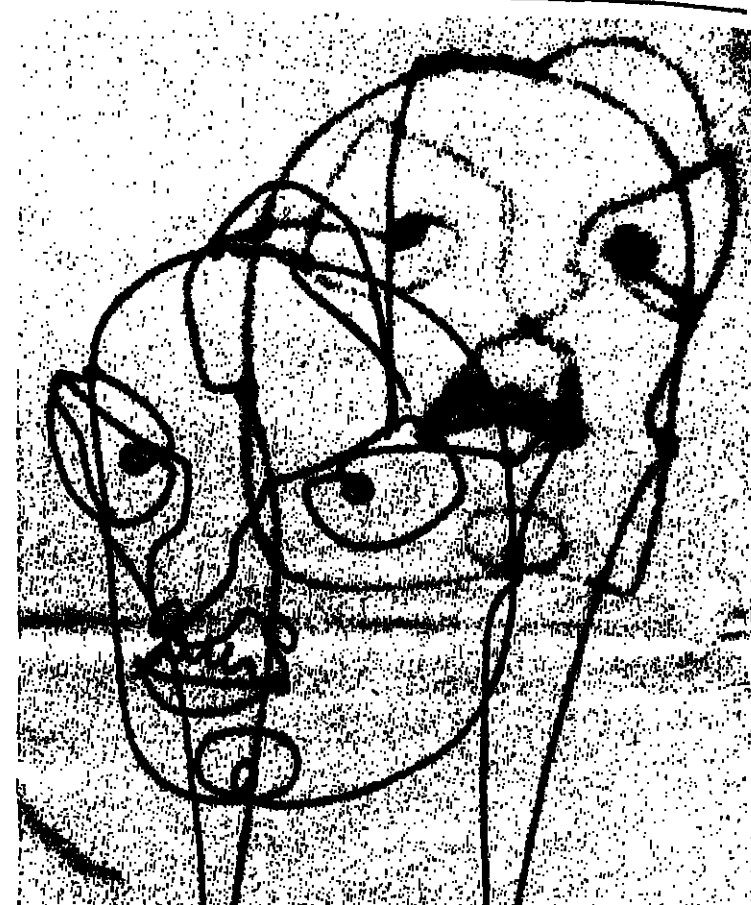
This morning there was a meeting of all the women. Most of the vocal whites emphasised guilt, we are all guilty; most of the blacks attack. People tiptoe around blacks because you don't argue with a black - everything you say will be attacked as racist. The other white move is to attack other "liberal" whites and ally themselves with the blacks. . . . The whole thing was about what sins we were. The Cubans were disgusted about the way we made a mess, leaving clothes around, and the amount of water we used taking long showers. . . . And as the Cubans cleaned out the bathroom we continued to bicker about who was guilty.

That was at the slob level. Higher up the intellectual ladder, however, it was much the same. Of the H6 massacre, Mary McCarthy admitted: "There is no way of knowing what really happened," but added: "I should prefer to think that it was the Americans."

If the political pilgrimage is essentially a religious exercise, and the need to believe in secular Utopias and totalitarian heroes a substitute for genuine faith, how does one explain the religious delegations who have lent themselves so easily to the propaganda of their hosts? To judge by Hollander's compendium, they are not, it must be said, an impressive collection. It would be difficult to conceive of a less spiritual figure than Hewlett Johnson, with his breathtaking personal vanity and his shameless grovelling before naked power. One thing these religious groups have had in common is an uneasy and revealing anxiety not to meet native Christians in the totalitarian states they visit. Thus the head of a Canadian Presbyterian mission explained: "... we purposely excluded contact with the Church. . . . Positively we wanted [to] give full attention to understanding the China experiment as the Chinese themselves would present it. Negatively, we felt it. . . might be embarrassing to Chinese Christians trying to carry on church activities quietly." The head of a Quaker mission to Hanoi took a similar line, saying "its

members did not go on an inquisitorial mission to check on allegations of repression. . . . If the accusations of widespread repression were true, the religious leaders and others would have protested rather than waiting for outsiders to speak out." This kind of humbug speaks for itself. A clergyman who is the guest of a militant atheist regime which he knows persecutes religion and who deliberately eschews the opportunity to give comfort to its victims is plainly a man of little faith.

It is notable, as Hollander's material indicates, that the political pilgrims have always been more attracted by the illusion, however implausible, than the reality, however solid. When the Russians, from 1956 on, admitted officially that the Stalinist millennium was a lie, and that they were now making efforts to improve conditions, the pilgrims virtually ceased: the shrine had been polluted by daylight. Exactly the same thing happened after the fall of the "Gang of Four" led to the revelation that Mao, too, had feet of clay. The millenniums are not interested in fallen or crumbled idols. They do not want the human, with all its imperfections - they can get that at home - but the super-human, the divine. It does not matter if the illusion is fragile: they can perform prodigies of apologetics to maintain it, as the Webbs did for Stalin or Noam Chomsky for the Khmer Rouge. But once the custodians of the shrine cease to be a party to the deception, and make scepticism official, the millenniums are off to fresh woods. Yes; but which woods? With Stalin gone, Mao gone, Ho gone, Castro gone - he admits he locks up homosexuals - where is the political pilgrim to take his eager double-vision today? There is no easy answer. Hollander notes a brief Scandinavian-student interest in Albania, and he suggests that when Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* goes to Angola for spiritual uplift, others are bound to follow. But that has the air of scraping the millennial barrel. Perhaps the current revival of mass-unilateralism, so reminiscent of the radical religious crowd-movements of the Middle Ages, should be seen as a spiritual holding operation, pending the emergence of a new totalitarian messiah.



This wire-portrait of Sheppard Fogel's work by Alexander Calder was exhibited at the Galerie Perrier, Paris in 1931. The illustration is taken from Masters of Caricature (240p. Weydenfeld and Nicolson. £15. 0 297 77904 4), the brilliant survey published earlier this year.

Ukeing it up

By Erik de Mauny

WILLIAM CAMPBELL:
VIII the Clown
256pp. Faber. £7.50.
0 571 11794 5

It was in the depths of the Great Depression of the early 1930s that the young William Campbell, despairing of finding a "regular job", picked up his meagre possessions - a racing bicycle, one suit, and a ukulele - and headed eastwards for Leningrad. That he should choose this direction was entirely logical. His family, founder members of the British Communist movement, were ardent supporters of the young Soviet State, and his stepfather, John Ross Campbell, eventually became First Deputy to Georgy Dimitroff at the head of the Comintern. Oddly, though, William Campbell strongly opposed the Soviet Union, one suit, and there he remained, even the harsh reality never stuck to it. In fact, the author stuck it for nearly half a century before returning finally to Britain, and then it was as a defector, since he had rashly acquired Soviet citizenship in 1939.

The Russians adore diminutives, so the "VIII" of the title is entirely congruent, but the "Clown" (they also adore clowns) needs some qualification. Comparatively little of the author's long career as an entertainer was spent in the Soviet circus, and most of it in vaudeville, on the music-hall stage and, during the war, in a front-line concert party touring the various battle areas. In fact, "Comrade Campbell" first went to work in an aviation factory, helping to make training aircraft out of plywood and canvas. He released the warmth and kindness of the Russian workers, especially the women who took him to their capacious bosoms, but the job itself became increasingly boring. The unlikely instrument of his deliverance was the Invasion of Russia in 1941. When the Spithead mutiny took place in 1939, one of the leading mutineers atvergordon was, indeed, Len Winnet, but he was not sentenced to imprisonment (he spent a few weeks confined to barracks before being dismissed the service, but the authorities deliberately avoided courts martial), nor did he later emigrate to the Soviet Union as a result of an "exchange" with the Soviet Gov. nment: he was told to go there by the then Secretary of the British Communist Party, Harry Pollitt. These are unfortunate blemishes which are otherwise an entertaining narrative by a distinctly unusual entertainer.

If all seemed as if the mutiny

tomorrow of Soviet propaganda had arrived. But then came the first of the great Stalin purges. Overnight, dear friends were denounced as "enemies of the people" and vanished into oblivion. Campbell himself became increasingly aware of the ubiquitous presence of the KGB, and in the frenzy of "anti-comopolitanism" that marked the post-war purges of 1946 and 1947, he seems to have been several times within a hair's breadth of being arrested. One wonders why he did not get out, when by pulling strings he might have managed it. But by then he had too closely identified himself with the sufferings of his fellow Soviet citizens. He had also made an outstandingly successful marriage to his second wife, Elena, a ballerina, who joined him in his act.

Both during and after the war, their touring life brought them into frequent contact with the famous, and this lively narrative is studded with vivid, unexpected portraits of the great Jewish actor, Mikhailov, of Dusanayev and Dohnenko, of Svyatoslav Richter and Arkady Raikin and others. There are also many darker passages: on the fate of the *byshyie*, former members of the aristocracy and the middle class, on the incredible disorder behind the Soviet front following the Nazi invasion of June 1941; on the steps of Leningrad, and on the great battles of the southern front.

There are a number of errors. The Russian verb "calls" is *zovet*, not *zobet*; Osetia is not a Republic; Khrushchev fell from power in 1964, not 1963; the Daniel involved in the notorious Sinyavsky-Daniel trial is twice spelt wrongly as "Daniels". These are relatively minor faults. Far more serious is the highly distorted account of one person's role in the most famous British naval mutiny in modern times. This is referred to as the Spithead mutiny in 1938. What the author is really talking about is the Invergordon mutiny of 1931. The Spithead mutiny took place in 1939. One of the leading mutineers atvergordon was, indeed, Len Winnet, but he was not sentenced to imprisonment (he spent a few weeks confined to barracks before being dismissed the service, but the authorities deliberately avoided courts martial), nor did he later emigrate to the Soviet Union as a result of an "exchange" with the Soviet Gov. nment: he was told to go there by the then Secretary of the British Communist Party, Harry Pollitt. These are unfortunate blemishes which are otherwise an entertaining narrative by a distinctly unusual entertainer.

Angst and roses

By Gabriele Annan

STEFAN ZWEIG:
The Royal Game and Other Stories
Translated from the German by Jill Sutcliffe
250pp. Cape. £6.95.
0 224 01984 8

Stefan Zweig was born in Vienna in 1881 - this new and very fluent translation of *The Royal Game* marks his centenary. It has an enthusiastic introduction by John Fowles (the British Zweig?). "Even famous writer," he says, "understates the prodigious reputation Zweig enjoyed in the last decade or so of his life, when he was arguably the most widely read and translated author in the world." He was, perhaps, more famous for his historical biographies - of Erasmus, Marie Antoinette, Fouché, Mary Queen of Scots - than for his fiction. Thomas Mann could not stand the "cheap parallels" with present-day events that Zweig was always drawing in his historical writing. John Fowles, on the other hand, detects the voice of history in his fiction: speaking of the two earliest stories in this collection (which is not chronological), he writes: "we already detect the uneasy, *Angst*, a culture already in trouble, already predicating the later century." This is stretching the point: the *Angst* in "Angst" ("Fear") and "The Burning Secret" is simply the Angst felt by a bewildered child and two adulterous ladies afraid of the consequences. But one can see why Fowles likes Zweig: they share a predilection for what Zweig called "unusual character", unusual situations, high colour and high temperatures.

The Royal Game has been assembled from work published between 1912 and 1942, the year in which Zweig died. He had just finished the title-story, which hinges on the Nazi

rise to power in Germany and Zweig's native Austria - events that led finally to his suicide as a refugee in Brazil. One of the passengers on a ship sailing from New York to Buenos Aires is the world chess champion, a surly Yugoslav peasant boy. His history is told at some length; one falls into the trap: this must be the hero of the story. A group of chess enthusiasts band together to play a multiple game against him. He is just about to checkmate them when the true hero appears like a classical *deus ex machina*. Dr R. brings the game to a draw. The next day, though reluctant to play again, he beats the Yugoslav, and then falls into a kind of frenzy. The narrator manages to coax him back to normal just in time: he understands what is happening, since between the first and second games Dr R. has told him his story. During many months of solitary confinement and attempted brainwashing by Nazi interrogators, Dr R. has saved his sanity and the secrets that the interrogators tried to extract by playing mental chess with himself. The game became an obsession, a fever, and finally led to a nervous breakdown and release.

"Fear" is about a lawyer's wife, Irene, engaged in a tepid, casual love affair. A sinister woman appears, claims to be Irene's lover's former mistress, and blackmails her. She appears again and again, increasing her pressure until she drives poor Irene into buying a lethal dose from a chemist. At this juncture Irene's husband reveals that the blackmailer is an out-of-work actress he has hired to bring Irene back to her senses and to him. He has never stopped loving her. This is supposed to be a happy ending.

But if Irene's husband is enough to inflame the breast of any feminist, however temperate, the man in "Letter From An Unknown Woman" would drive her to distraction. He is a famous writer who takes a flat in a block inhabited by a poor widow and her schoolgirl daughter. The

daughter develops a passion for him without ever speaking to him. Her mother remarries and they move to another town; the girl dreams only of returning to Vienna, and as soon as she is sixteen she finds a job there. Whenever she is not slaving in a warehouse she moons about the writer's building. One night he picks her up without even noticing that he has seen her before. It is a one-night stand, but she conceives a child. In order to bring him up, she becomes a *poule de luxe* of great élat, able to pick and choose her clients and even to turn down marriage proposals from rich counts and bankers. But she thinks only of her writer, and each year on his birthday sends him anonymously a bunch of white roses because at their one meeting he gave her a white rose from a vase in his room. Then he sees her in a nightclub: this time he is struck by her beauty and goes away from her protector, and takes her home to bed. Even then he does not recognize her, but he almost kills her with shame and anguish by putting money in her muff the next morning. A year later her son dies of influenza and she tells the writer her story in a letter written as she prepares to commit suicide: "But who... who will send you white roses now on your birthday?"

If "Letter From An Unknown Woman" is the most kitsch story, the least highly coloured and most credible (though not necessarily the most readable - all are furiously readable in "The Burning Secret"). It is set in a rustic hotel. A bored twelve-year-old boy begins to idolize a young man because the latter takes notice of him and treats him like an equal. The boy, Edgar, does not recognize the man's ulterior motive: the baron wants to meet Edgar's mother, a fading, middle-aged, middle-class beauty who looks as though she might be easy prey. At first she is reluctant and keeps Edgar by her as a chaperone. But as she begins to respond to the baron, they both find the child a nuisance, and



German actress Hanna Schygulla in Fassbinder's film of Fontane's *Effi Briest*; from Hanna Schygulla, Bilder aus Filmen von Rainer Werner Fassbinder (Schirmer/Mosel Verlag, Munich, 1980p. 3 921375 83 5)

begin to pick on him, ignore him, try to get rid of him, lie to him. He feels bewildered and desolate: what has he done? Why have these two people whom he loves abandoned him? He grows desperate and vengeful. Finally, just as his mother is about to succumb, he runs away. He is found, and his mother's virtue is saved in the nick of time by her anxiety about him. The child's state of mind is brilliantly evoked, but the up-beat ending seems spurious, just as it does in "Fear".

In spite of that though, these stories

are almost totally successful in their art-deco way. They grip; the screws turn tighter and tighter, the fever rises from the page until the reader begins to feel feverish too. Some stories recall those of Arthur Schnitzler, set among the Viennese upper-middle classes; others suggest the stories of Somerset Maugham, and characteristically begin with shipboard acquaintances. All Zweig's narratives spring from violent emotion: there is enough psychological truth to make them something more than mere thrillers, but too much artful manipulation for great fiction.

Preventing the Panzers

By C.M. Woodhouse

MAX HASTINGS:

Das Reich
Resistance and the march of the 2nd SS Panzer Division through France; June 1944
264pp. Michael Joseph. £9.95.
0 7181 2074 4

Whether the Special Operations Executive (SOE) did any good in the Second World War is still a vexed question. Wartime propaganda naturally exaggerated the achievements of the European Resistance movements against the German occupation. But even at the time there were strong, unpublished doubts by policy-makers in the services and the Foreign Office. With the important exception of Churchill and Eisenhower, the judgment of the war planners was generally adverse.

Montgomery wanted nothing to do with irregular warfare. "Bomber" Harris was extremely reluctant to release aircraft for SOE. The Foreign Office shared these doubts. One diplomat, a future Permanent Under-Secretary, thought the exploits of the Resistance were "largely fiction created by SOE". Another advocated an "inactive sabotage policy", whatever that might mean. The Foreign Office also thought SOE's activities and connections politically dangerous.

Certainly there were glaring faults. Most of SOE's agents in the field were very young and inexperienced. Their superior outside, though more experienced in general, some had no experience of sabotage or guerrilla warfare: how could they have? Moreover, Resistance organizations were a law unto themselves, especially those dominated by the Communists, who were the most vigorous and ruthless. British officers could give them no orders and over the general objective which they transmitted in a brief Allied Commanders-in-Chief were little respected if they did not suit local

interests. Personality was the only source of influence on the Resistance, but there were weak personalities as well as strong ones.

So the question remains, did SOE do any good? If a paradigmatic answer is to be found anywhere, it should surely be in France, where all the difficulties of external control and internal dissension were encapsulated, and where also courage, skill and national pride were superabundant. A scholarly attempt to write the history of Resistance in France was made by M.R.D. Foot fifteen years ago, but it was perhaps too dispassionate to answer the question definitively. Now Max Hastings, who made his name as a military historian with his *Bomber Command*, has taken a different approach to the question.

Against a broadly sketched background of the French Resistance and the role of SOE over three years of the occupation, he has concentrated on a single episode: the movement of the 2nd SS Panzer Division (Das Reich) across France from south to north in the second week of June 1944. Its task was to reach the Normandy beach-head in time to defeat the Allied invasion. The task of SOE and the Resistance was to frustrate it.

The episode contains all the elements of a richly detailed military story. There was the French *maquis* in its many different and incompatible manifestations. There was SOE plotting targets on the railways in order to force the German armoured units to use the roads. There were the British and American tanks dropped in at the last minute to reinforce the fire-power and mobility of the SOE agents. There was the RAF supplying parachutists and stores and attacking tactical targets such as petrol dumps. There were the Germans reacting with inexhaustible determination and ingenuity with atrocious brutality, especially at Orléans-sur-Clare.

And what was the upshot? The division reached Normandy about a week late and needed another week to regroup for action. It was not a negligible achievement for the French

Resistance and SOE, as Eisenhower acknowledged. Yet the Division lost only some thirty-five men out of 15,000. The French and even the British casualties were enormously higher, many of them killed in cold-blooded reprisals. The case of Orléans, where over 600 civilians were executed, was only the most notorious.

Mr Hastings's assessment is measured and just. He has talked to all the participants he could find - British, American, French, German - and has studied the documentary evidence. "Resistance is small business", as he quotes from one of his interviews. But a large number of small businesses add up to big business. Even a small operation, at precisely the right time and place, can be crucial in itself. The operation against Das Reich did not, taken in isolation, come quite into that category, as, for instance, the famous attack on the heavy-water plant in Norway. But its contribution to a cumulative total was considerable.

Still, there was something more. "The great contribution of Resistance," Hastings rightly says, "was towards the restoration of the soul of France." That is why an "inactive sabotage policy" was meaningless. There was bound to be Resistance wherever SOE existed or not. But to quote the author again, "without SOE Resistance could have achieved nothing". The converse, of course, is also true.

Mr Hastings takes as firm a grip on the reality of Resistance as he did of Bomber Command. His new book is more than his predecessor because he is less passionately concerned to prove a thesis. He is well-versed in the minutiae of oral history, with its limitations of memory and its own undercurrents and uncertainties. After all, there is no danger of missing the drama of the 24 hours in which the *maquis* captured a battalion commander and lost Violet Szabo, while Das Reich carried out its rapid and lasting cleanup of the local population.

Emancipation and the marriage-market

By Anne Duchêne

WINIFRED HOLTBY:
Andersby World
310pp. 0 86068 207 2
The Crowded Streets
271pp. 0 86068 208 0
Virago. £2.95 each.

These first two novels of Winifred Holtby, originally published in 1923 and 1924, are presumably offered as pebbles in the feminist cairns, marking the hard trail upwards. Certainly, like the stones in most cairns, they are undistinguished in themselves but they engender some sense of fellowship with, and speculation about, those who walked the same path earlier. No doubt Virago, in its conscientious flushing-out of female writers, would have arrived at Winifred Holtby before long: we need not suspect any commercial connection with the recent revival through television of *Testament of Youth*, by her great friend Vera Brittain. The conjunction does, though, suggest the promise - or threat - of a new wave of seriousness: the sturdy earnest, provincial, middle-class aspirations of Vera and Winifred coming into the ascendancy after all the elegant patrician excesses of Virginia and Vita and Violet.

It was easier, in the 1920s, for a young woman from Oxford to set up as a writer and to be accepted as one, because she found a public less critical than today's - less generalist, if half-bakedly educated, and less constrained by financial concerns. Her language, as a result, could be less inhibited, more to the point, for instance, "Vera" and Winifred, as in their lives, passionate expressions of their devotion to each other, yet, by their earnestness, re-

fute absolutely any fashionable imputations of lesbianism: e.g. "was simply grateful to have found a friend who elicited such feelings, and the idiom of the day still allowed them to say so." It was a curious Edwardian bosom, partly of later "pashes" in the "dorm", but it allowed an innocent indulgence, one which has been sacrificed to the pressures of modern freedom.

The language in these two books from the 1920s is marvellously mixed. For the most part, it is to be honest and direct, but it is continually threatened by romanticist floridities - and then checked by a lively intelligence. In *Andersby World*, for instance, a cousin who is everything that the heroine is not - blonde and rich and a golf champion, and pregnant too - decides to take the heroine's grooming in charge in a way which "would be tender and gentle, with the tenderness of expectant motherhood" - fashionable yet considerate, thoughtful yet spontaneous; and just as this nonsense is setting one's teeth on edge, the next sentence reads: "Ursula found continual pleasure in the contemplation of her own spontaneity." It is as if two people were writing the book, one conventionally convincing at softness, the other criticising it.

Again in *The Crowded Streets*, a very emancipated young woman can say, in 1920: "My dearest Father, do not at your eleventh hour begin to play the heavy parent with me. All ways hitherto I've admired your dignified self-restraint about my eccentricities a good deal more than I have considered it advisable to state." She is, of course, bantering, and someone should write a thesis about the influence of banter on English prose - and people - at the turn of the century (the kind of "rallying and chaffing" (as the OED puts it) that moved Kipling to blur the outlines of "The Light That Failed"

by introducing the terminology of "Snally and Co.," that obliged Conrad to elephantine jocularities; that so much disappointed itself through language that a rejected H. G. Wells could exclaim: "Oh but, Isabel, I wanted the jolly march of our minds together!")

This kind of vestigial Victorianism haunts both these books. *Andersby World*, written when the author was twenty-two and published in 1923 when she was twenty-five, is a very ambitious and confused debut, so densely plotted that it would take an hour to resolve its themes. Partly it is about the strains imposed on a Yorkshire farming community when trade unionism raises a heavy head in the fields, talking of rates and strikes. The author had seen her own father return from his East Riding farm before these contentious waves broke over him and translated this stress into the experiences of a young farmer's wife - a *ferrière-maitresse*, as it were, twenty-eight, intelligent and childless, who, when her husband has given the reins of administration to her. Partly, therefore, the book is also about the personal checks and imbalances she meets when her innocent but autistic benevolence towards her land and her village begins to meet resistance. The dynamics of "village" life are minutely understood, and the dialect (laboriously reproduced, there are also several scenes of sober conversation with a powerful maternal force, but Holtby never really acknowledges these, and though Mary Cadogan's introduction does, she draws no conclusions - understandingly, since they might have been embarrassing.) Beyond this, again, the heroine is also sexually attracted to the young man from Oxford who brings the Marxist gospel to her village: one of those boys, to be well understood, who, to lady novelists, whose lips had a humdrum twist, half gay and half pathetic, that

went straight to Mary's heart". Later, when Mary's feelings are less maternal, they kiss in a corn-field; but she dismisses him at once, and he writes a letter to apologise.

"Grappling with all these themes in a small compass, *Andersby World* is a mess, but a generous mess. By contrast *The Crowded Streets*, published a year later in 1924, is a cold and protracted thesis about the wretchedness of young post-war women exposed to the marriage-market, where they stood like hirelings waiting to be picked, and about the chilly conventions - Clare Hardisty's introduction calls them suburban - but they were provincial - of a society where "sex-success" was a girl's only rating, and "sex", of course, meant marriage. The heroine is called Muriel, and is rather directly reminiscent of Stevie Smith's Muriel, waiting for Death to ask her to dance. Muriel, interested in mathematics and astronomy decently quenched, stays at home to look after her mother, who has lost her vitality. She does leave her Yorkshire village once, to undergo the rigours of life in a Yorkshire farming family, into which her feckless young sister has desperately married; this interlude, "The Inevitable Land", a girl and a second-ought grandpa, may remind loyalists like Clare Hardisty of *Wuthering Heights*, but in fact it is closer to *Cold Comfort Farm*.

Vera Brittain, in *Testament of Friendship*, her book about Winifred Holtby, suggests that *The Crowded Streets* lost spontaneity when the first version was scrapped and the whole rewritten, but also remarks that John Murray accepted it for its "quiet power and scenes of unusual merit" (which somehow sounds like another school report on Muriel). Certainly, it is very minutely and knowledgeably charted, over 270 closely-printed pages. And in the end, Muriel finds salvation in housekeeping in London for an emancipated

young woman; so that she can even, in the final pages, turn down a proposal from the young squire she has seduced since childhood, rather than submit herself again to the sterility of their village.

Vera Brittain is also quite sure that the John Murray reader who turned down his thumb to publication was J. B. Priestley, who reported: "It has no passion, not even for freedom. . . . The unattractive heroine will appeal, neither to the sexually unattractive, who will be repelled by this ruthless but calm analysis of their failure, nor to the sexually attractive, who will ignore her, as they do in life." It certainly sounds like Priestley; and it is a view with which we may still sympathize.

Neither of these books, as examples of writing, need detain any but the most serious students of *South Riding*, which did not appear until 1936. For those with the leisure and the inclination to consider some fairly recent shifts in sensibility, though, they have their value.

In A. J. Quinnell's *The Mahdi* (252pp. Macmillan. £6.95. 0 333 32671 7), the CIA and MI6 join forces to bring about a mind-boggling operation: the creation of a successor to the prophet - the Mahdi, whose claims to be the leader of all Muslims will be legitimized by a miracle performed, with some help from Western technology, before assembled millions at Mecca. A fast-moving, technically detailed, slick and professional piece of work, whose flow is completely unimpeded by any character interest. It is interesting to compare this novel with an earlier treatment of a very similar theme: John Buchan's *Greenmantle* - hopelessly old-fashioned, of course, hand-carved in wood, rather than injection-moulded in plastic.

T.J.B.

Memories of the primeval chirp

By Russell Davies

DENNIS POTTER:
Pennies from Heaven
196pp. Quattr. £6.50.
0 7043 3200 1

The sight of another "novelization" of a television series does not uplift the heart, and those forbidding words "Now a major film from M.G.M." simply pile dread on melancholia. The odds, clearly, were always against Dennis Potter, and this book duly transforms one of his successes into a defeat. It is a great shame. In its original form, *Pennies From Heaven* was called "a personal triumph" for Potter, and that was truer than the cliché allows. Many of us have watched Potter's work — in the last decade at least — with an eye for the drama beneath the drama: the sight of a sensitive man doing battle with a terrible disillusionment which will never quite submit to the process of being spread among the dramatic persona. One feels always for Potter as an individual, for be-

tween hope and raging despair there does not seem to exist, for him, the intervening net of cynicism which breaks the fall for most of us. When political faith collapsed and religion rushed in with a damagingly clumsy first-aid, the dramatist was left to fight off nihilism more or less from memory. With memories, indeed. His "nostalgia" puts the word to shame; it is the most strenuous form of spiritual yearning, by which Potter urges us back to an Edenic state which, his intellect recognizes, was never really there. He has acknowledged, for example, that childhood innocence, the Eden of the poets, was always surrounded by the same world of exploitation and betrayal and selling (Potter is a fundamentalist in his disgust with commerce) that we see around us now.

But *Pennies From Heaven* found a device — trivial, slight, but vital — to get round all this. The cheap little tunes on its soundtrack, punctuating the action (by stopping it) and filling the head of the music-saloon "hero" Arthur, were perceived to be in some fragmentary way immune from moral decay. It was hard to argue that they really were immune:

what could be more damning, after all, than the fact that you could sell them across a counter? But there was something — some primeval chirp in those silly old refrains, that kept hope alive. Some unreachable optimism, and even goodness, was kept going in the grooves of the old shellac. You saw it in people's faces within Potter's play, and his present-day audience responded commensurately. Every song embodied a declaration of faith by the beleaguered playwright, and if it was nothing more than "I sing, therefore I am" — a barely verbalized equivalent of whistling in the dark — then so be it.

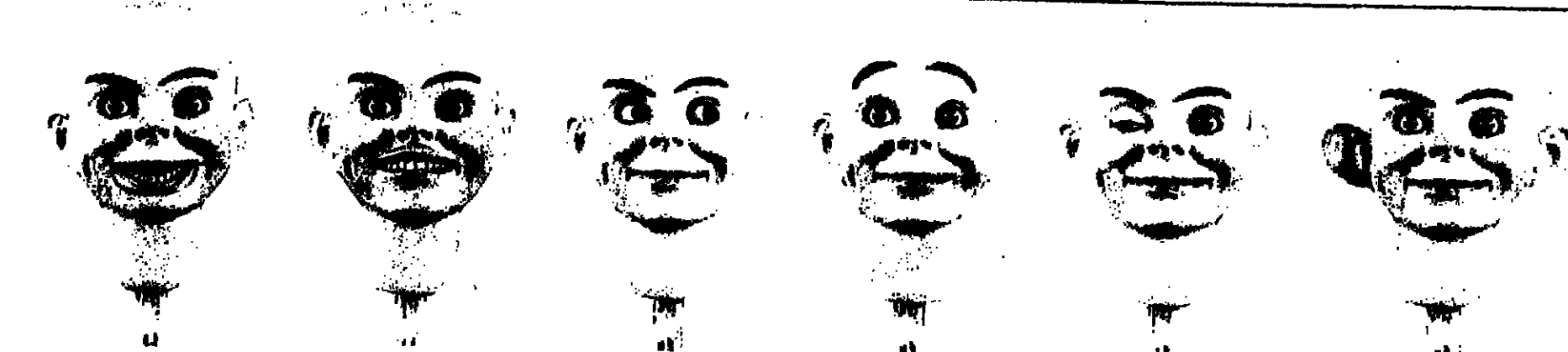
A novel perforce must cast this device aside. The page is not alive to the sound of music. The primitive sense of release — sob into song — which the television drama offered cannot be provided, by third-person narrative. Besides, the very sound of the music filled out the character of Arthur in his role as a song-sheet vendor. It explained things about him, it accounted for the soul we were supposed to sense within his shell of bluff. In the novelized version, for all that tunes may still run through Arthur's head, he might as

well be selling soap. The scene, moreover, has been transported away from the leafy lanes of England to the chill of Illinois (presumably for the benefit and comfort of the major film-makers at M.G.M.). Potter is ill at ease here, his dialogue uncharacteristically turbid with untended colours. "You're a — what they call it? A fatalist, right?" he said, touched by awe. "That's the only word that's left, lover, she smiled..." Exchanges like this merely remind one that Potter faced the task of concocting American speech. Under the Hollywood tags, there's an earnest English heart-beat in progress, and you can hear its distracting echoes all the time. "That's all right, honey," he responded, with evident relief. "I've got enough moxie for both us!" Sadly, he doesn't have it at all.

Potter is not a natural prose narrator, not in a faded America anyway. Partly it's because an element of stage-direction survives in the wooden wording ("Arthur began to shift about again, both in actual physical movements and in his mind..."), especially when description is called for. "An early juke was

quivering its own brand of music" is a line written from the television scene-setter's point of view: it makes a hole in the atmosphere and involvement drains away. More sedate again — though I think this might not have happened if Potter hadn't felt obliged to lay on the verbal vigour for the American audience — is his habit of trying to jazz up exhausted forms of words. "It was already too late. His goose was cooked, and basted with sizzling hot fat" is not better but worse than the original bare cliché.

At least two false endings prolong what is by now an agony. Nothing in the book has helped persuade us that "Arthur, after his fashion, and deeply flawed as he was by his own compromises and evasions, nevertheless retained... some memory of the Garden of Eden." But viewers who saw Bob Hoskins's portrayal on the screen will remember that there once was an Arthur of whom this could be said. It's getting to the stage where we're dealing in memories of memories of memories; but something of the kind will have to suffice if we are to rescue a fragment of uncompromised hope from this recycled matter.



Devastating the dissemblers

By J. M. Ziman

MARTIN GARDNER:
Science, Good, Bad and Bogus
415pp. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus
Books. \$18.95.
0 87985 144 4

Does anyone around here remember Uri Geller? About five years ago his antics were all the intellectual rage. He appeared on television in Britain and America, demonstrating an uncanny ability to bend keys without apparently touching them. The august scientific journal *Nature* published a solemn account of experiments testing his powers of extra-sensory perception. Several well-established academic physicists were convinced that these powers were "psychic", and defended this view in a televised debate against the American "magician" James Randi. Having been criticized for publicly losing my cool against all that rubbish in that debate, I got a certain amount of quiet satisfaction from the fact that Mr Geller's conjuring tricks have been pretty thoroughly exposed, and that the most competent of his scientific advocates has publicly withdrawn his support. So although I would myself begrudge spending much time and effort on unmasking such patent frauds, I am thoroughly with Martin Gardner in treating them with the derision they deserve.

Mr Gardner is known to millions for his inventive, amusing and learned mathematical column in *Scientific American*, and for many other articles and books about science for the general public. The present work is a sequel to his *Roads and Fallacies in the Name of Science*, which ought to have put a stop to most pseudo-scientific absurdities when it appeared. Although I would myself begrudge spending much time and effort on unmasking such patent frauds, I am thoroughly with Martin Gardner in treating them with the derision they deserve.

It is impossible, moreover, that there are "psi forces" that transmit information instantaneously from mind to mind over large distances, or that the subtle paradoxes of quantum mechanics are relevant to such matters, or that there can be contact with the minds of the dead (this particular doctrine is getting a bit out of hand).

His hard-headed, commonsense style, based upon H. L. Mencken's advice "one horse-lough is worth ten thousand syllables" is probably the best tactic. In most cases, indeed, the facts themselves — gross inconsistencies of arguments, gaping loopholes in the test procedures, shufflings and evasions — are quite persuasive enough without further mockery. Gardner has a short way with dissemblers, but does his homework thoroughly on such details as the previous careers of his subjects (Geller was a professional con-man; his religious and political beliefs a number of scientific investigators of parapsychology or the precise circumstances of the supposedly paranormal events of the conditions of J. B. Rhine's most famous case of "extrasensory perception" did not guard against a trivial form of cheating). As he points out, much of this careful research that controverted these claims "by simply

getting negative results" is glossed over or ignored for its apparent dullness. Although, by its very nature, as an unedited collection of book reviews, this book is somewhat repetitious, it is immensely valuable as a source of reliable information on all sorts of queer fish and queer notions.

It would be easy to fill the rest of this review with comical or tragic examples of human folly or fraud drawn from this source — but that would be a little stale at second, or third-hand. One should, if possible, read Gardner's reviews in their original setting, savouring the accuracy of his aim and looking forward to the next issue of the journal, where their living target is sure to make a bigger fool of himself by trying to reply. This is a prime blood sport, in which the satisfaction of the spectators is entirely justifiable.

Nevertheless, though every shot goes home, it fails to kill. There is something very puzzling about this whole business of pseudo-science. Although I entirely approve of Gardner's objectives and methods in almost every detail, I am surprised to find that I do not perfectly sympathize with his attitude in general, nor precisely accept his opinion on what is really at issue. It is all so confused and extravagant, on a more distant and wider shore of the mind than I am normally accustomed to visit.

It is impossible, for example, that metal objects can be bent or broken without the application of mechanical force, or that an isolated person can correctly determine the suit of a card being drawn at random in another room, or that living fairies should present themselves to be photographed by two young girls, or that flying saucers loaded with little green men, keep arriving on Earth from the planets of distant stars, or that an uneducated Brazilian peasant could diagnose and cure the diseases of thousands of genuine sufferers. Whether such events are utterly banal like spoon-bending, or utterly fantastic, like the landing of immense flying saucers, they cannot be reconciled with any of the world maps by which we usually navigate through life.

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It is impossible, on the other hand, that intelligent, well-educated people, apparently in full possession of their senses, occupying posts of responsibility in education or science, could be utterly mistaken, or completely fooled, or temporarily blinded to such an extent that their reports of such events are entirely without foundation. Indeed, whether the observer is a trendily imaginative professor of theoretical physics, like John Taylor, or a tough-minded academic bureaucrat like Anatoly Alexandrov, the Rector of Leningrad University and now the President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, it would be incredible if their testimony were completely false.

It is impossible, nevertheless, that any sane person contemplating such events should not think of the devices by means of which "magicians" contrive to "see through blindfolds" by peeking down their noses, or manipulate objects while distracting the attention of their audience by irrelevant actions, or affect compass needles or geiger-counters with small magnets or radioactive sources hidden in their palms or their toe-cloths, or "read thoughts" by listening for subtle cues in questioning, or pick up messages from hidden sources via their accomplices. It is incredible that there can be people "so supremely ignorant of methods of deception, yet so convinced of their personal ability to detect fraud" that they will watch a conjurer vanish an elephant on a brightly lit stage, and readily admit they cannot explain how he did it. Next day they will watch an ex-magician move an empty pill bottle three inches and instantly declare that no conjuring techniques could possibly have been used.

It is impossible, all the same, that a publishing house with a reputable scientific and technical list, a public or commercial corporation broadcasting scientific and educational programmes on radio and television, or newspaper directed towards educated professional people, could also publish absolutely wild and incoherent pseudo-scientific claims, entirely at variance with every standard of scientific accuracy and — what is apparently without any effort — check these claims against expert opinion and regardless of the consequences for a reader or listener.

Short Story

As I knocked the cup from the shelf
My mind flashed up reprisal

That glass you dropped, the dark hotel room,
My letter in the rack, your car driving away.

A masterpiece of prose.
The cup hit the floor. I turned to pick up the pieces.

Gonnies Bensley

These photographs of the various, complicated movements of the insular "cheeky boy" ventriloquist head are included in I Can See Your Lips Moving: The History and Art of Ventriloquism, (174pp. Kaye and Ward. £12.50. 0 7182 587 3), a fascinating illustrated account of the subject by a skilled practitioner of "belly speaking", the appropriately named Valentine Vox. Ventriloquism has its origins in ancient divination and mystic rites; condemned by the Church in the Middle Ages because of its use by "witches" it has never quite lost its association, however comic, with the occult. A notable, music-loving coalminer, Thomas Britten, died of shock in 1714 after a ventriloquist conjured up the voice of God. The enormous success of Edgar Bergen with Charlie McCarthy and Peter Brough with Archie Andrews in the visually limited medium of the radio denotes a continuance even in this century of blind faith in the appreciation of ventriloquism.

It is impossible, in sum, in this day and age, that such irrational doctrines as those of astrology, biblical fundamentalism, Scientology, transcendental meditation, faith healing, etc. could be taken seriously by thousands — even millions — of people, including sublimely talented scientists and frighteningly responsible statesmen. Whether based upon ancient religious revelation or modern scientific quackery, such doctrines are all quite incredible to an open rational intellect.

Like any sane, sensible, well-informed person, Martin Gardner years for a world in which all these incredible would be truly impossible. So, I guess, do I. But the real world is not like that — and as lifelong disciples of the Red Queen, we have sadly learnt to believe as many as six such impossibilities before breakfast, and then gone on fearlessly to lunch and dinner. That is to say, we accept the fact of the illogicality of human beliefs and behaviour, however much we may deplore it and attempt to combat it. Such is the fate and the duty of the responsible intellectual.

But that is not really the difficulty. It is the whole complex of interconnected "impossibilities" that makes the *proliferation* of pseudoscience so intractable. How can one think clearly about the relationship between actions and ideas all of which one personally finds incredible? How can one understand the behaviour of people with whom one has no empathic comprehension on matters that they find compelling? There is a hermeneutic barrier that baffles the most enlightened — philosophical, sociological or sociological analysts.

The only thing I can suggest is that one should start a little further inside science itself. There, after all, is where we feel at home, and have adequate personal experience of how it really works. Instead of seeking for elements of scientific rationality in the pseudo-scientific margins, we might recall that even the best of high science has its intellectual and personal pathologies which are only a little less fantastic and exaggerated than those of pseudo-science.

Gardner tries to make a clear distinction between the case of the professional scientist obsessed with an eccentric theory and that of the complete ignoramus asserting nonsensical scientific doctrines. This distinction is really tenuous: at the psychological level, the professional scientist who goes a bit dotty has two clear advantages over the layman: he has ready access to the formal media of scientific communication, and commands that sort of humility seems in order.

Keeping it brutal

By Patricia Craig

GEOFFREY O'BRIEN:
Hardboiled America
The Lurid Years of Paperbacks
144pp. Van Nostrand Reinhold.
£14.40.
0 442 23140 7

The cover painting for this volume is appropriately lurid and inept: it shows a frightful-looking criminal caught with his tie avary and his hands full of hundred-dollar bills, standing just behind him is a black-eyed blonde in evening dress, clutching a handbag and an automatic. The approximate date of this striking little scene is 1950, when the garish American paperback reached its zenith. The industry began, as Geoffrey O'Brien points out in his informative survey, with the ten titles brought out by Pocket Books (trademark a studios-looking kangaroo) in 1939.

The term "hard-boiled fiction" was originally applied to the tough detective novel which, in the hands of writers like Hammett and Chandler, gave American readers an indigenous product that owed nothing to the classic traditions of English detective writing. These authors, and the more literate of their followers, made the standard crime story of the pulp papers respectable. Private-eye fiction quickly became a staple of the paperback companies (Pocket Books was followed by Dell, Avon, Popular Library, Gold, Signet, among others), though it was overtaken in popularity by one of its offshoots, the hard-boiled romance. This unassuming category, which depends for its effects on a dispiriting mixture of the tawdry and the torrid ("A surging novel of temptation and sin" is a typical summing-up), flourished in an age that demanded over-increasing sensation. You need a paradox to describe these thick accounts of lust and duplicity, and George Gralla (in his essay entitled "The Hard-Boiled Detective Novel") has provided one: "realistic melodrama". No room here for the unexceptionable or the insipid in any guise.

Hardboiled America contains a good many reproductions of paperback covers (1939 to the late 1950s), and of them in colour: the picture soon becomes plain. After the decorative abstractions of early Dell art-work, for example, comes a rash of pictorial illustration, which matches the novel's content in its distrust of understatement. Artists, and writers share an attachment to the overblown, both depicting a world in which sexual attractiveness in women is equated with mammary malformation. Naturally, the cover women are forward ladies who wear as little as possible, favoured garments are

towels, bathrobes, petticoats, ball-gowns, men's shirts (c 1950), blouses open to the waist, skirts blowing in the wind. Whatever they're doing, they do it inadequately clothed. (You only see girls in outdoor coats if they're about to be done in in a dark alley. "She died in terror with the killer at her heels.") A woman with a passion-racked body and a "Ghost-ridden soul" is shown in her suspenders. From this type of cover illustration it is possible to learn a great deal about underwear in the underworld.

Authors like James M. Cain, Horace McCoy and David Goodis dominated the market in the 1940s and 1950s; and styles of illustration which suited the intertemporal quality of their work (all the novelists and romantics doom) were employed universally, and not always appropriately. When the novel in question was not actually lurid, robust or wayward in the required manner (there were some), it underwent a slight metamorphosis in the mind of the paperback publisher. Take D. H. Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gypsy* (an irresistible title for the market, never mind the content): on the Avon cover of 1952 you find a gypsy looking like a gigolo and a virgin looking like Lana Turner in a towel. Lawrence's *Goodbye to Berlin* gets a gutter-press headline for its return to the tag: "Bohemian life in a wicked city" — the hard-boiled aim is to isolate the bizarre, the potentially fascinating, however misleadingly. Of Chandler's *The Little Sister*, for instance, we're told straight away: "The corpse's wig held a deadly secret".

Even among the less reputable writers, titles do not always seem to be chosen with unimpeachable discretion. What, for instance, is the sedate, English author, Patricia Wentworth doing in the company of unbridled crime writers like D. W. V. Babcock and Richard Ellington ("My gun-butt smashed his skull")? Her covers can accommodate popular motifs — like the gun-holding female, the blonde-haired skull and the person falling from a great height — without undue distortion. It's true, but the narrative tone is always coy and genteel — never a wisecrack in sight, and no relish at all for the sickening thump of the boot in the eyeball.

The brutal impulse in American fiction is seen at its nastiest in the Hammer horror of Mickey Spillane, but this was by no means its only outlet. It affects detectives and criminals alike. In the tougher detective novel, the battered investigator is a figure just as common as the battered hoodlum (sometimes the two are indistinguishable). Instead of clever, valourous detectives who look like knights, the novelists' crusaders are depicted against all kinds of social abuse. By the early 1950s, popular

authors had fallen well and truly under the spell of the sordid; delinquency, juvenile gangsterism, narcotic addiction and other pungent topics received extensive treatment. Chandler's mean streets were transformed into teaming alleyways where the luckless, the corruptible and the maladjusted congregated ("They were spawned in the sidestreets of hell"). The adjective "hard-hitting" is applied so often to this type of fiction that it comes as no surprise to find an author calling himself Wallop.

The lurid paperback, according to Geoffrey O'Brien, blazes from its shelf "like a fire someone has forgotten to extinguish. It lives, and cannot be ignored." His study provides a satisfactory guide to the themes and the embellishments of popular literature, but he often gives in to the temptation of taking his material too seriously. Is *Loose Ladies* really a manifestation of the emotional void at the heart of American society? Can a subversive intention really be attributed to the author of *A Homicide for Hannah*? Dearest, we read, "enraged that it cannot be fulfilled... turns desperate, paranoid, violent". The author (who can blame him?), surrounded by innumerable low-brow stories in gaudy covers and feeling, perhaps, like Tony Last in the jungle as he rereads Dickens to all eternity, detects a "central crack in the great design" (I think

he's referring to an American vision of the Good Society). To the central crack is added a troubling wobble, and then a nagging itch (Geoffrey O'Brien is no more given to understatement than Howard Hunt or Wendell Brown). Faced with the impending upheaval all this implies, the avid paperback reader can do as thing but turn to the prose of, say, John D. MacDonald "because its images sustain the life in him". The blurb of this study, which refers unsmilingly to "America's secret mythology" when it means the type of novel that used to be available on any railway bookstall, is rather an inflated way to describe a genre that contains more unadulterated trash than any other.

The game of bafflement

By Ruth Dudley Edwards

AGATHA CHRISTIE, DOROTHY L. SAYERS, G. K. CHESTERTON, and others:
The Floating Admiral
By Certain Members of The Detection Club
309pp. Macmillan. £5.95.
0 333 31955 9

If G. D. H. and Margaret Cole count as one, this curiosity-cum-novel, first published in 1931, was most unnaturally conceived by thirteen members of the Detection Club. It is difficult to imagine that it could even have been brought to term without Dorothy Sayers's efforts as midwife as well as contributor. She put into the project all the enthusiasm she felt for the "Club" itself, where she took the ceremonial with such seriousness that (her biographer notes) younger members found her a dampener on much of its whimsy.

Her introduction to this book is certainly a mixture of solemnity and fun. There is earnest reiteration of the Club's commitment "to eschew accident and coincidence, and play the detection game in an honourable manner". That same principle underlies *The Floating Admiral*. Starting with Canon Victor Whitechurch, who converted himself with the discovery of an ancient corpse in a boat drifting down the river, the author in turn added a chapter with no assistance from anything but his own wit. The chapters were rigid: each writer must not only continue the story in such a way that the whole was capable of solution but must also, and at the time of writing, compose a full solution. Dorothy Sayers testified to the difficulties of the task. "Speaking for myself, I may say that the helpless bewilderment into which

I was plunged on receipt of Mr. Milward Kennedy's little bunch of brain-teasers was, apparently, fully equalled by the hideous sensation of bafflement which overcame Father Ronald Knox when, having, as I fondly imagined, cleared up such that was obscure, I handed the problem on to him."

There is a book of irrefragable charm for students of the detective story. Agatha Christie, faced with unfamiliar characters, nevertheless managed to introduce into her brief contribution not only new twists but also one of her own vintage types — the garrulous lady. How marvellously good she was too that Freeman Wills Croft — against all odds — should make most of his running from an examination of railway timetables. Unlike those two — who were acting true to form — Ronald Knox introduced an element of self-parody, saddling the unfortunate detective with a list of questions thrown up by the case that in the end came to Thirty-Nine Articles of Doubt.

Of course the whole was somewhat uneven. The best submission, that of Anthony Berkeley, was an exercise in glittering ingenuity and, fifty years on, a reminder of how disgracefully undervalued he has been. A few of the others, like Edgar Jepson and Clemence Dane, seem to have concluded that the waters were altogether too deep and confined themselves to brief chapters muddying just one area. Yet they all succeeded in carrying the story along — even the Coles, whose main gifts were certainly not in the writing of fiction. G. K. Chesterton is perhaps the exception: He had the easy job of writing the prologue after the story had been finished, and made it so delicate that it makes little sense unless read afterwards.

That the exercise produced not just a curiosity but a readable novel

has, of course, a great deal to do with the Detection Club members' pure delight in the setting and solving of puzzles. There is a lengthy appendix containing the solutions worked out by each author, in which their love for that aspect of their craft is evident. Indeed Dorothy Sayers's enthusiasm here got the better of her: it is hard to maintain interest in her theory for twenty pages. Clemence Dane is much more enduring when, after a half-hearted shot at a solution, she ends with "no, frankly, in a complete muddle as to what has happened, and have tried to write a chapter that anybody can use to prove anything they like."

It is difficult to imagine our best detective story writers playing the same game nowadays — Michael Innes following a chapter of suburban menace from Ruth Rendell, putting a light-hearted gloss on the story and then handing it over to P. D. James for the bleak psychological explanation. Yet it sounds a highly engaging prospect. But where is the midwife?

Glady Mitchell in *Lovers, Make Mine* (192pp: Michael Joseph, £6.55. 0 7181 231 0) gives us death at an amateur performance. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when Pyramus stabs himself rather too successfully with a property dagger, which does not fold up as he hopes it will. The resulting brouhaha is cleared up, with beauty and efficiency, by the renowned Dame Beatrice Lestrangle Bradley. The large cast is occasionally confusing, and some of the child actors seem phenomenally advanced for their age, but it's unmistakably a Glady Mitchell affair, as such, to be welcomed by the connoisseur.

T.J.B.

The taxonomy of tin-pan alley

By Anthony Burgess

RICK ALTMAN (Editor):

Genre: The Musical
228pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul
BFI. £9.95. (paperback, £4.95)
0 7100 0816 3

In the field of the film musical (*genre* they say here, forbidding and, as it turns out, ominous) I can claim at least a foiled though not easily forgettable creative participation. In 1967 I was summoned to Hollywood by Warner Brothers to write the script and lyrics for a musical on the life of William Shakespeare. The producer was William Conrad, the bulky private eye of *Camion*, and the director was to be Joseph L. Mankiewicz. Those were the days of the hard-ticket movie, and *The Bard* (a misleading title soon changed, on my insistence, to *Will*) was projected as a four-hour extravaganza with an all-star cast. Robert Stephens was to play the lead and Maggie Smith Mistress Hathaway. For the rest, there was a clear and unanimous choice for Ben Jonson - "Peter Ustinov, because he looks like Ben Jonson." I wrote script and lyrics and, while my hand was in, also the music, which survives in a studio recording, but the film was never made. Warner Brothers changed hands and scrapped all existing projects, but *Will* still haunts the baroque splendours of Hollywood as one of the great impossible dreams. It could have worked. I dream of it regularly in 70 mm. technical. Reading this collection of highly intellectual essays on the film musical, I wonder how it would have fitted into the various sociocultural taxonomies.

While conceding that the form is primarily intended to entertain, these cinematic philosophers are concerned, overwhelmingly with a *Cohier* approach, as the titles of the essays indicate. Thus, Robin Wood gives us "Art and Ideology: Notes on *Silk Stockings*," Jim Collins "Towards Defining a Matrix of the Musical Comedy: The Place of the Spectator Within the Textual Mechanisms," Rick Altman "The American Film Musical: Paradigmatic Structure and Meditative Function." Professor Altman teaches French and Comparative Literature at the University of Iowa and is Director of the Inter-University Centre for Film Studies in Paris. He deals in the higher cinema. From the pages he edits here, only the subdued *cadre* of political and structuralist concern suggests that there may well be pleasure to be obtained from the genre. Certainly there is no visceral relief.

Let us, with Mark Roth, look at some Warner's musicals of the 1930s and see how far they exemplify, or fall to, the spirit of the New Deal. In *42nd Street*, Warner Baxter ("You're going to dance your feet off... It's going to be the toughest six weeks you ever lived through... Not one of you leaves the stage tonight until I get what I want") represents a traditional view of authority, charged with a Calvinistic work-shoes. Baxter gives orders but is removed from the actual techniques of production. It is left to James Cagney, in *Footlight Parade*, to demonstrate the new collectivist spirit. Cagney, like Baxter, plays a producer, but a producer who is also a hooper and can step into the show when the leading man is too drunk to perform. Here, we are told, is the spirit of the New Deal, with the collectivist added to the Calvinistic. *42nd Street* ends with the weary Baxter, cynical and alone, saying "Just another show." Things are as they have always been, "an alternation of success and failure, boom and bust for eternity." But *Footlight Parade* ends on stage with the Busby Berkeley production number "Shanghai Lil," a huge bar fight ending in order and tranquility, drills, the American flag, even a portrait of Roosevelt. Which, this is a better ending than the other seems not to be the point.

social significance is easier to demonstrate than the values of art.

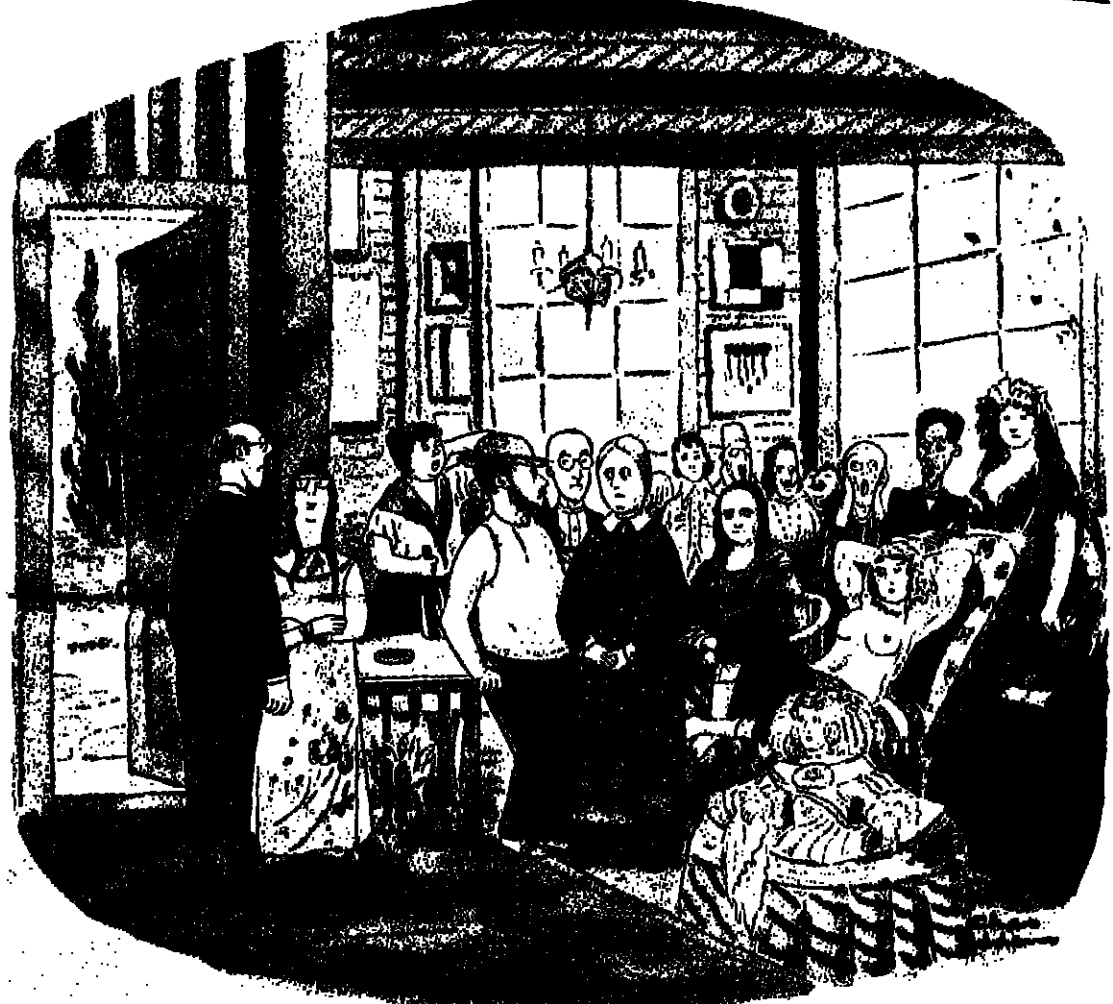
One cannot discuss the great age of the musical without lavish references to Busby Berkeley. He was bound to come in for some hard knocks as an exploiter of female beauty in an age when the eye has become an instrument of rape, and Lucy Fischer has much to say about an exploitative philosophy summed up in Berkeley's "I love beautiful girls and I love to gather and show many beautiful girls with regular features and well-made bodies." She concentrates on the crudely titled *Dames*, which versifies the Berkeley creed in a song of Dick Powell's: Who cares if there's a plot or not, if it's got a lot of dames?

What do you go for? Go to see the show for?

Tell the truth - you go to see those beautiful dames. It is very grim stuff. "What we see on the screen is a shot of the Berkeley harem arranged in pyramidal fashion against a complex decor. Imperceptibly, the image of the actual women transmutates to that of a photographic representation. And in a parody of sexual entry, the number ends with Powell's head breaking through the image surface." In what I would take to be a harmless little sequence - Joan Blondell in "The Girl at the Ironing Board" - we are told that she is "gang-raped" by a lot of laundry which slides down upon her, and that "the overwhelmingly male syndrome" of clothes fetishism (Kinsey, 1953) is imposed unusually (though "significantly") on a female persona. Nobody saw this in 1934, naturally, but, by God, we see it now.

We come now to the divine Cyd Charisse who, in *The Band Wagon*, according to Dennis Giles, represents "the mother who possesses a phallus" to the lost little boy who is Fred Astaire. He has lost his star status, but she is secure in hers. Her legs are powerful, and these "and her mastery of the show-at-hand all tend to lead her virility in the eyes of the fragile, disconsolate Astaire." Mercifully, however, she retracts her phallus. Astaire metaphorically kills the father-director of the show and Charisse's own lover and "Charisse deprives herself of her parental status by suffering auto-castration." We are ready for the show to go on for an indefinite run, meaning eroticism without end; "That's entertainment," goes the song, and love is part of it. In *Silk Stockings* Cyd Charisse is in the service not of Freud but of Marx, though Robin Wood admits that "the film's creative vitality cannot reasonably be reduced to its ideological contradictions." Still, there is a fair attempt at such a reduction. Mr. Wood prefers *Silk Stockings* to the Garbo vehicle *Ninotchka* on which it is based because "Cyd Charisse's discovery, through dance, of her individual physical existence opposes itself to both the state-determined automatism of the film's Communism and the woman-object of its Capitalism."

The most massive piece of dissection and exegesis comes in Raymond Bellour's "Segmenting/Analysing," which takes *Gigi* (perhaps a suitable subject since it has a Parisian setting) and splits it into segments, suprasegments and syntagmas, and demonstrates the service of a demonstration of the film of the *soixante-treize*, which is the resolution of an Oedipal situation, it is beautifully done, but was it worth doing? The assumption, throughout this collection, is that so fitting a structure as a film musical can bear the weight of all this analysis in depth. The makers of those delectable and brilliantly carpentered entertainments are seen, in the Freudian manner, as the spoken and sung rather than as the speaking and singing, as the instruments of archetypal and Zeligian. We are being told here to use them as indices of Freudian, Marxist, and Levi-Straussian truths. In the process, the dancers legs become paralysed and the pretty little tunes are distorted.



"I think you know everybody."

The picture on the cover of Charles Addams's most recent collection of his peerless cartoons from the New Yorker, *Creature Comforts* (Unnumbered pages. Heinemann. £7.95. 0 434 00703 X) shows a typical Addams middle-aged male figure (drawn with perhaps more than a hint of self-portraiture) standing in front of a door bedecked with locks and bolts under which has been thrust a letter bearing a large, red heart. The drawing on the title page shows the same man turning a key in one of his locks while a protruding saw cuts away the floor from around his feet. Addams's world, at once a private, bizarre individual vision, which revels in the unexpected and the out of the ordinary, and a creation which inspires immediate and widespread curiosity and acclaim, has been delightfully comforting us in the New Yorker since 1935 with its threats to our sense of security. Changes in the real world since then have not been completely ignored by Addams. The book contains the brilliant conceit of a man taking a Polaroid snap-shot whose subject, a woman, only gradually comes into being as her image becomes defined in the photograph. But the peculiar power of Addams is such that he needs to make few concessions to changing fashions. The cartoon shown here is one to tease the cognoscenti of figurative art.

In search of lost chords

By Gerald Abraham

NIGEL LEWIS

Paperback
246pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.
0 241 10235 9

Before the Second World War the Preussische Staatsbibliothek held one of the finest collections of music, particularly manuscripts of the greatest masters, in the world. They included the autograph scores of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and the three instrumental movements of No 9, the C minor Piano Concerto, four of the late quartets, and a vast quantity of Mozart: Act 1 and II of *Die Entführung*, Act II and IV of *Figaro*, Act I of *Così*, the whole of *Zauberflöte*, eleven symphonies (including the "Prague", the B flat and "Jupiter"), eight solo piano concertos, the C minor Mass, and very much else. (Nigel Lewis adds a non-existent but not minor symphony by Schubert - probably the B flat, D485, which was in the Staatsbibliothek.)

In 1945, as a result of British air-raids on Berlin, the music holdings of the Staatsbibliothek were moved for safety first to Schloss Fürstentum in Silesia and then to the Benedictine abbey at Grüssau. When hostilities ended, and the Polish border was established on the Oder-Neisse line, Grüssau became Krzeszów and the Poles unostentatiously moved the musical treasures to the Biblioteka Jagiellońska at Cracow. The Polish authorities, in a fit of noble generosity, gave them little idea what the treasures were, and they were afraid of the German demands for the return of the treasures - kept remarkably quiet about it. But secrets of this nature are bound to leak out. In the days of the German occupation, German collectors and about 1965, when the Haydn Institute at Cologne was being set up, I was told "We know where the

missing Mozart scores are. They are quite safe and had better be left for the time being."

However, it was only twelve years later that the Polish Government began to come clean, and then in May 1977, Gluck, on the occasion of the ratification of a treaty of friendship between Poland and the Democratic Republic of East Berlin, a token gift: the complete *Zauberflöte*, the C minor Mass and the "Jupiter" symphony, the three movements of Beethoven's Ninth and his C minor Piano Concerto, some Bach - and *soyuz nichi*. It was a token but not a very generous one, and there the matter rests. At least, scholars now have access to the main treasure; though if they come from the West they have to travel a little further to get it.

These are the salient facts which Mr Lewis has elaborated in his investigative journey into a 246-page book. The pudding is enormous. One whole chapter is devoted to an English zoologist's attempt to identify a Brazilian fish and Lewis has to tell us that

to the zoologist strict rules of scientific naming are vitally important. Natural history uses names to distinguish between different groups of the same, from the Mammals and Reptiles down to the smallest sub-species and, though nature takes no stock of family trees, the study of nature does...

Four pages are given to reconstruction of the thoughts of the director of the music section of the Biblioteka Jagiellońska before his suicide in January 1968, ingenious speculation but unsupported by any real evidence. Lewis is very innocent - Alexander von Humboldt was rather more than an "eighteenth-century explorer of South America" - and he even believes that when Mozart's clavichord was played in the birthplace at Salzburg on the bicentenary "the sound" filled Mozart's house. It is evident that he has never heard a clavichord.

of the dramatic personae, a flamboyant busybody named Carleton Smith - on no account to be confused with the distinguished American musicologist Carleton Sprague Smith. Smith was one of the first American civilians to get into Germany at the end of the war and at once began searching for missing music, in the first place the Wagner manuscripts known to have been presented to Hitler in April 1939. There is no doubt that Smith played a very active part in the search for the lost scores, even if it was much less effective than he would have us believe - Lewis makes no secret of his doubts of Smith's veracity - and in the end they led to nothing.

The real interest of Lewis's book lies in the meticulous following of most false trails, the pinning down of rumours, the revelations of international bungling and skulduggery. And it rises with each appearance of Carleton Smith:

Smith was not just an experienced music critic, but a qualified accountant, with a degree from the University of Illinois behind him, business studies at other universities, and wartime experience as an adviser and "image builder" for big American corporations. He had tried his hand at selling jeans to the Soviet Union (a pair of jeans-embossed gold cuff-links was sent to Stalin), working in South America for the Rubber Development Corporation, and joining in the "drive for better homes" for Califorma.

At the age of four we find him backstage at the Chicago Opera, sitting on Mary Garden's lap. Later he had known Paderewski, Furtwängler, the Wagner family, Richard Strauss and Sibyllus. It was President Truman himself who sent him on his mission to find the lost treasures. (Lewis quotes "that they hit it off well together. They had a lot in common.") And there is a charming anecdote of Bernard Shaw whom Smith visited when he was dying. Smith took him "a manuscript page containing a piece of melody by Mozart. 'It is like looking into sunlight', said Shaw."

The hero of the clavichord-pounding incident is the most colourful character

The Vindication of Obesity

By Tom Disch

After the satieties of summer, the amplitude
Of autumn, and winter's grasping
For the last calories of warmth and cake
Comes the season of penitence.
We wear drab colors then and comb our hair
Differently. We weigh ourselves
On trustworthy scales whose unwavering needles
Accuse us of gross excesses. No one so fat
Will ever be initiate to the gnolls
Of fitness nor share the normal human experience
Of paradise. Our only hope then
Lies in diet and expection, our only happiness
Those tasteless ikons everywhere advertising
The pleasures of fully resurrected flesh.

Within the bobbling, semi-solid fat we feel
The incipient musculature, the ridges
Of the unseen ribcage, the wistful lungs.
The heart, so trusted and abused, the scapogast
Glands, the coiling bowels - all of it intact
And waiting, like South America, to be set free.

And so one's horrid bulk heaves up
From its recliner to stuff itself
Defiantly into its casings, thence
To the gymnasium for another taxing episode
In the decline of one's personal Empire.
Well met, Trimachio! You've gained some weight.

Fat, though never beautiful, may yet be proud.
Gibbon, Aquinas, several famous comedians,
Even Lord Buddha - all were complacently obese.
They lived before the fatal Scardale diet,
When wisdom had immense vested interests
And dared to smile at the vernal exorcisms
Of the slim. What is it all for, that
Gauntness, those lissome arms, torsos rippled
Into breastplates - what but war?
Once, however, one's declared
Hors de combat, there's no need to clank about
In armor. Let Hotspur and Hal dispute
The relative allure of their thighs and doublets;
We, Falstaff, will settle for a pint of ale
Snug in a dark booth at the back of the bar,
Dipping our hands into perpetually replenished
Bowls of peanuts, exchanging recipes.

Omnia Acipimus, our motto, means
There is no food, however ominous
We won't omnivorously devour! Flesh
Of frogs, of eels, of festuses: cheeses rank
As death; eggs, seeds, sprouts, fungi,
Whatever promise of growth we can divert
To our own swollen purposes. We lick our lips
And lift our glasses to the clouds
And huntman whose *villains d'été* we are -
Long may they delve and slaughter!

Hal speaks: Old man, put by
This self-expensive merriment. Feel the pinch
Of your trousers and not your desires.
Recognize that pig in the mirror
As a mortal enemy. Feed it nothing
But scorn till it confesses
Itself to be the new, ameliorated you.
Deed those needless fifty pounds
To a deserving tailor, geriatric
Specialists, a grateful posterity.

Falstaff replies: Enough, dear lad. A great posteritor's
The cause we serve who live in hope
Not of crowns but coronaries.
Do not you know that, like the swan,
Even the carefullest eater soon enough dies?
Why then, how then, resist the dreadful
Evening's neon solace, EAT? Say I removed
These wreaths of fat to yam the shapely
Cranium beneath - how would that benefit
Your commonwealth, my lads? Shall every bar
And bakery give way to studios
Of dance and martial arts? Shall I subside
On Perrier and salad greens? No wine no bread!
Nor even salt, because my heart, for reasons

Of its own, will not keep pace with my ingestive
Genius. No, Falstaff defies your regimens!
He eats, he drinks, and merrily repeats
The process tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

Meanwhile tonight, just down the street,
I know a restaurant that serves
Wines of inexpressible immodesty.
Such peppers in oil, such onions in cream,
Such breasts of capon in Sauce Supreme!
I can also recommend the *boeuf en daube*,
swartvinder, *pasta puttanesca*, *squab*...

No need to listen to Gargantua
Ruminating old menus. That tongue will wag
Until it gets a bone. Instead, let's pan
Across the wider world and measure man.
From suckers born every minute to old farts
Drooling Flxodent, behold the classic span
Whose broad curve encloses all waistlines
Whatever: the innocents of 28;
The initial twinges rounding the bend to 32;
Then 36, when mirrors are banished for their lies;
The reckless shame of 44, no stopping now,
It's 50 next, and horrors even more
Unpardonable, until at last all waists
Are wasted in the toilet of the tomb,
While our immortal parts (as some believe)
Swell beyond measurement and rise
To glory coextensive with the sky's,
Where, eternally obese, our Saints appear
In Levi's larger than the troposphere.
Such are the sizes all men fit, and such
The consequence of eating far too much.

But seriously, Doc, am I to blame?
As much as any box of Cheerios
I am the product of Big Businesses,
For whom I loyally, compulsively
Consume. Before my infant gums
Had blunted teeth, they tempted me
With honeyed words and sugared slops
Dyed to those colors research proves
Would surely deprave and addict.
Hyperkinetically I bolted down
Each landscape of meat and potatoes
Questing the grail of desert.
And it was there, among those modulated sweets,
My ravished tongue first learned to speak;
Schools by paradigms of silverware,
Cooking triads à la Lévi-Strauss,
My mother's wit and father's Polishian
Command of cliché: a happy childhood,
And not unrepresentative, I thrive,
Converting calories to play
And, a few years later, to ballet. I burned
With fever of caffeine, relaxed
In baths of alcohol, and survived
The intervals of foodlessness by smoking Kents.

This was the wisdom of our tribe
(One of the largest in Minnesota),
The Over-reaching, Over-achieving Over-eaters.
Now, with 40 years behind me in the OOO,
It would be folly to repent. Of what?
Those honey-saturated hours in the hive
Are sweet to memory still. Doubtless
I'll continue to observe certain equinoctial
Dietary rites, but when I diet it will be
In the service of my tongue.
That old recidivist, that it may eat
More immoderately when I am thin.

Reverting briefly to the matter of
Man's first temptation and fall from grace,
I must in fairness exculpate
General Foods, et al. Adam didn't sin
Because Eve tempted him; he chose to eat
That apple. He might - we all might - have refused.
But once having bitten, no slaner could wish
Never to have known, never to have been
Involved and implicated in the dialectic actions
Of that flesh, which, in its complex
Disintegrations, informs each hungry pore
With news of the deliciousness of death.

Monarchs at the mike

By Arthur Marshall

Voices Out of the Air
The Royal Christmas Broadcasts
1932-1981
Introduced by Tom Fleming
158pp. Heinemann. £7.95.
0 434 26680 9

Those of us who are old enough to have heard the very first Royal Christmas Broadcast from Sandringham in 1932 will remember well what the BBC so rightly calls "the sense of occasion" and the feeling that it was a regal blessing being conferred on those sufficiently prosperous to own a receiving set (by no means a common household object in those days). Indeed, so impressive was the event that, as the somewhat guttural tones rolled out the platitudes ("It may be that our future will lay upon us more than one stern test. Our past will have taught us how to meet it unshaken"), whole families rose to their feet and stood with bowed heads. One might, good heavens, have been either in church or in Japan.

There was some surprise and a certain uneasiness on finding that we possessed such a foreign-sounding king, surprise that is until the richly European background and parentage were recalled. Edward VIII, possibly wishing to be as different in this as in everything else, sounded like an American trying to speak Cockney. The slightly foreign voice hung on a bit with George VI but has since disappeared completely, to be replaced by a marvelously clear and limpid speech entirely suited to the material it is required to pump forth, for the normal and chatty tones of everyday conversation are barred. A royal occasion is hardly the moment for an animated flow ("My dear, I can barely wait to get to Balmoral").

Earlier in 1932, the King and Queen had visited Broadcasting House, recently constructed (itself "got them round" in fifty minutes), while, and practically at the same moment, Professor Picard, who looked like everybody's idea of a slightly cracked scientist, was ascending nearly 100 miles in a balloon, for one of the features of Tom Fleming's pleasant résumé of the royal Christmas talks is to list items of interest that were going on elsewhere in the same year, and Picard's basket then loomed large in the public imagination.

This, in 1939 and while George VI was making what is possibly the most warmly remembered broadcast of them all, the one about "I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year", we are reminded that the Spanish Civil War was ending, our Phoney War was on, and the Royal

Oak had been disastrously sunk.

It is interesting to discover that the Monarchy did not at first take kindly to the idea of broadcasting and that it required ten years of postal wooing to coax George V to the microphone at Christmas (and even as a listener he refused to have an aerial on the Sandringham roof). To get him going, His Majesty preferred, instead of the customary red light signal, a tap on the shoulder when it was time to start, and he had to be warned not to rustle or crackle his script. How merry to learn that he sat down too heavily in the favourite wicker armchair from which he was to speak and went right through the seat. Those hoping for some rattling royal oath (imagine Henry VIII) will be disappointed. "God bless my soul!" seems to have sufficed.

In 1932 the public reaction was ecstatic, and the *Spectator*, commenting on the moment when the King cleared his throat, cheered all its readers by saying "A King who coughs is a fellow human being". The hour-long round-the-world Prologue to the affair was tastefully summed up by the dear old *Morning Post* as "a family re-union on a scale of grandeur". It was estimated that his voice had reached twenty million people, and "Paris talked of nothing else". Mr Fleming loyally and enthusiastically states, an announcement that at least one reader who knows the French takes leave to doubt.

With every royal message that one is now able here to live through again (and many of us have heard all of them), one sympathizes increasingly with the crushing formality of their lives, and the alleged fondness for practical jokes in private becomes entirely understandable. Jokes and the unexpected pleased - Victoria used to let out a happy peal when anybody tumbled over and measured their length, and wasn't it Queen Alexandra who adored apple pie being when the apple pie and had belonged to somebody else, and this, despite the fact that back in general was a tricky subject when considered in connection with her rather fidgety royal spouse. Foreign princes used to squirl each other with soda-water and ride bicycles up and down the palace corridors ("We shrieked"). In others this activity would be called "letting off steam", a conception that seems a shade incongruous when applied to Victoria, formidable even in death.

Who, one wonders, writes the royal speeches? A Secretary? A Courtier? Some dusty don? There has been, down the years, a fine continuity of style, and what else could the matter contain but words that are reassuring, forward-looking, dedicated, hopeful for the future, and breathing a general and Christian belief in the goodness of mankind. And very, nice too.

Park outside

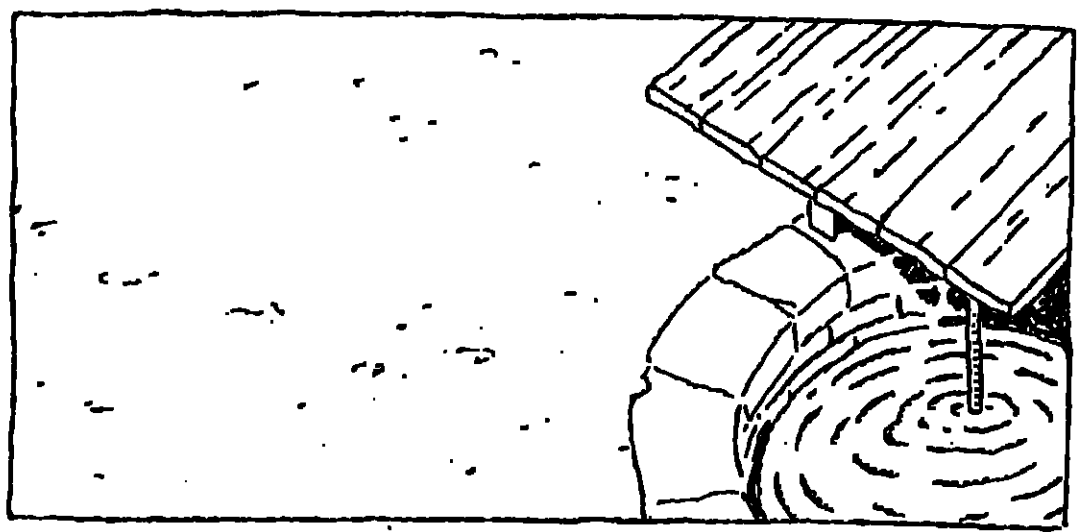
by Hugo Williams

MICHAEL PARKINSON:
Parkinson's Love
With drawings by Michael Lewis
158pp. Michael Joseph. £5.95.
0 507316 05 X

Anyone perusing the jacket could be forgiven for thinking this Tom Parky's autobiography. The parrot-like features appear against a Lowryesque background by Alan Lowryes, suggesting a celebrity's return to Coronation Street. But it's only a collection of his short articles, reprinted from *Punch* and the *Sunday Times* with a new introduction and a conclusion headed "Success".

The articles are autobiographical in the sense that they are written in the original, old-fashioned type of New Journalism, so if you like Parky's brand of chummy conservatism, here it is in a volume like a chip butler with meringue pie. The style is not so much a Lowryesque as a grumpy old man's rambling, but read as sen-

atorial nostalgia - good old Fred Trueman saying "Well, get this on 'em 'cause they're a bit off". For the yams to come back to the company of fruit sportsmen in a well-stocked bar. They look to emulate the laugh-bulldog humour of England, that England that has been at one time the most successful of the new ceramic flush toilet on which is perched the local councillor who is due to open this new facility. It emerges with trousers round ankles, clutching the severed lavatory chain. What a funny sight! I didn't believe a word of it.



HOURS OF SILENCE FOLLOWED, PUNCTUATED ONLY BY THE ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLE SOUND OF THE HAWSER LEAVING AND ENTERING THE SAGO.....

This example of the work of Glen Baxter appears in 5 x 5, a new anthology of texts and drawings, edited by Asa Benveniste (68pp. Trigram Press, 32 Windsor Road, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks HX7 8LF. Paperback, £3.75.) which also features contributions from Ian Breakwell, Ivor Cullen, Anthony Earnshaw and Jeff Nuttall.

The princess and the goblin

By Lorna Sage

NIGEL DEMPSTER:
H.R.H. The Princess Margaret
A Life Unfulfilled
192pp. Quartet Books. £7.95.
0 7043 2314 1

Now all gather round, while Mr Dempster tells a story.

The Dee Valley had never seemed so tranquil or beautiful as Princess Margaret looked out from the bedroom, on the morning of her twentieth birthday.

Something wrong, surely? But let's not fidget:

... looking back on half her lifetime, she may well have thought, "if I had been allowed to marry Peter, I am sure we would have been happy. And who knows? It might have lasted."

Settle down, pass round the iced, draw a little closer to the fire, there's a chilly draught from somewhere. This is the Bad Fairy's story. For Wedding Year, the goblin's tale of Unhappily Ever After.

Certainly, Princess Margaret has never been more out in the cold, and Nigel Dempster's timing is impeccable, whatever you may think of his style. And in fact, as he gets into his stride, the pathos and the local colour fade away, and - names, places, fortunes parade across the page with an awful briskness. There are no "intimate revelations", but the effect of lining up the old ones and to end it quite nastily enough, vaguely reminiscent of something Nabokov said about the copulation of gladiators, except of course, that this was thinking of pornography, whereas *A Life Unfulfilled* couldn't be more decent. It's all about decency, and how it has been lost.

Princess Margaret's life is a story of the London gossip column that has been universal in their condemnation of "the action", and it provides a rather special kind of guide to - not exactly what could be done - but what could be said. The book is a collection of old gossip, from the 1930s to the 1970s, and it is a very good one. It is a book that should be read by everyone who is interested in the life of the Princess, and it is a book that should be read by everyone who is interested in the life of the British monarchy.

If Princess Margaret herself (whatever that means) seems already to be getting a little lost, that's appropriate in his way. But back to the story. Childhood passes quickly, in half a dozen pages. Girl Scout Elizabeth is groomed to rule, Brownie Margaret Rose sings and dances and acts, while just off stage Peter Townsend flies too many stories, marries, and becomes the King's equerry. The Princess begins to lead a double life, partying with the eligible her father approved ("two Scottish dukedoms

and three massive estates") while secret romance blossoms, and is eventually, after Townsend's divorce, the build-up to her sister's coronation, plastered over the world's newspapers, with not a murmur from the British press until - as Dempster says, with a kind of wonder - "the *People* in age-old style, repeated the stories, and then denounced them".

A pattern is set: public opinion calls the tune, Townsend is exiled to Belgium, and two more years of partying follow before Margaret decides, at twenty-five, not to marry him, "mindful of the Church's teaching that Christian marriage is indissoluble, and conscious of my duty to the Commonwealth".

The famous broadcast has an odd look these days. Perhaps the most "period" event, though, is the Princess's botched engagement to the rebound to the last of the eligibles, not "spoken for", Billy Wallace - "a seven-figure family fortune... uncertain health... dabbling on the Stock Exchange... Le Touquet for a weekend's gambling... Newmarket, Ascot, and Goodwood... White's, and Pratt's... the 400... The 1950s, like an old-fashioned novel, set 'totes' against money and position and "duty", and neither side won. We end, temporarily, on the edge of Bohemia, with a small flurry of references to the arts - Louis Armstrong ("your Princess Margaret is one hip chick"), and the Royal Ballet - heralding the entry on the scene of Antony Armstrong-Jones.

The style changes alarmingly. Tony is "the first man to peel from Margaret the carefully applied veneer of her Royal upbringing"; he gets up a secret meeting place in Rotherhithe; he has "plans". But sex no sooner makes its appearance on cue for the 1960s (than it turns ambiguous - the first two best men proposed for the wedding (Jeremy Fry, Jeremy Thorpe) are rejected, in favour of Dr Roger Giffard (he was married to writer Penelope Giffard, who contributed to *Queen* and *Vogue*, and seemed refreshingly heterosexual). And then, the marriage somehow includes the Press, rather than shutting them out - not only through the Snowdon photographic business, but in friendships with Patrick Leitchfield, Jocelyn Stevens, Peter Sellers and Britt Ekland - so that as increasingly serious flirtations and mutual infidelities turn family life into a charade, news leaks proliferate. Dempster is discreetly indiscreet: about it all, and again, perhaps, the loose ends are most telling - the sad sub-plot of Robin Douglas Home, for instance, who lost his £30-a-week job playing the piano at the Clermont when he sold a photograph of his employer John Aspinall in his swimming pool with a

tiger to the *Daily Express* for £50, and who "committed suicide when... of Princess Margaret's letters to him turned up for auction in New York".

Military Drinking

Sir, - As P. H. Blyth observes (Letters, November 20) there is in many societies a close connection between drinking groups and warfare; and it would be easy to argue (against the views of Michael Yardley in the *New Statesman* of October 2) that this connection is a necessary and useful one. To quote Euripides' *Bacchae*, "Dionysus has some share in the work of Ares".

Two aspects are important. Soldiers cannot always be on the battlefield, and the drinking group is the most widespread leisure activity of the warrior band, reinforcing the solidarity and exclusiveness needed for the performance of its functions in war. Psychologically too the release of inhibitions experienced with alcohol is closely related to the heightened state of consciousness typical of the battlefield.

These aspects relate to constant human characteristics and to the inevitable stresses of war: it is not therefore surprising to find Plato in the *Lysis* defending the ancient equivalent of the mess games and the ritualized violence of pay night as part of the preparation for war. Modern armies are notoriously reticent on such questions; but it would be interesting to know whether there is any closer connection between drinking rituals and styles of warfare, for instance whether different regiments have different mess customs corresponding to their functions in war.

OSWYN MURRAY.
Balliol College, Oxford OX1 3BJ.

'84 Charing Cross Road'

Sir, - I am sorry that Eric Korn should have spoilt his interesting review of *84 Charing Cross Road* (Commentary, December 11) with such a cheap sneer about the bookshop which Marks and Co ran at that address. It is tempting to attribute his lapse to a compelling need to find a suitable peroration but I suspect that the truth of the matter is that Mr Korn is too much of a newcomer to the trade to have known Marks and Co at its very successful best.

If in its latter years, the firm of Marks and Co did not include in its stock all the treasures of previous decades, the fault lay in the increasing age and ill-health of the partners, Ben Marks and Mark Cohen. In its heyday Marks and Co was a great bookshop and one with which my firm was happy to have had a close association for almost fifty years.

ANTHONY ROTA.
Bertram Rota Limited, 30 and 31 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LT.

Gluck

Sir, - That Peter Conrad's commentaries on operas and their productions are matters of narcissistic preening is something that anyone who reads him must immediately notice. But occasionally, when his misrepresentations of a composer in the interests of glamorous writing are sufficiently gross, the need to protest becomes urgent. In his account of Gluck (Commentary, December 11) Conrad characterizes his operas as "elegant essays in regret and mournful leave-taking", and claims that Alceste and Orfeo in the eponymous operas are initiated "into the post-mortem condition of chastened resignation, which is the ideal of neo-classicism". And that difficult to square with Gluck's admission to the first Paris Orfeo to "scream as though your bones were being sawn through", with Orfeo's fierce determination to retrieve Euridice from Hades at whatever cost, his taming of the Furies, or his long wrangle with Euridice herself. Nor does the famous aria "Che farò senza Euridice" "helplessly repeat itself, becoming immobilized in despair". It is available in a clothbound version (£20. 0 7108 0300 1).

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01003.

Harvester Press would like us to point out that *Roman Britain* by Malcolm Todd, which was reviewed in our issue of November 6, is also available in a clothbound version (£20. 0 7108 0300 1).

to the editor

The new editor of *The Times Literary Supplement* will be Jeremy Treglown. He will take up his appointment when the present editor, John Gross, leaves at the beginning of January. Mr Treglown, who is 35, is at present assistant editor on the *TLS*. Before entering journalism he taught English literature at Lincoln College, Oxford, and University College London.

Although Boswell had Hoole's notes and Hawkins's book while writing his *Life*, he chose to ignore these later utterances of Johnson's. But the setters of the competition evidently assumed that Boswell's second or third-hand account - Boswell was at his home in Edinburgh when Johnson died - must be the authentic truth.

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In the theological zoo

By Redmond O'Hanlon

HERBERT FRIEDMANN:

A Bestiary for Saint Jerome
Animal Symbolism in European
Religious Art
379pp. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press. Distributed by
Europarc, £21.
87474 446 6

This is the kind of book which Swann, miraculously released from all the intertwining inner Prussian weaknesses which preclude such achievement, might have written. Herbert Friedmann's inquiries have been multitudinous, his labours long, and his pursuit of portraits of Saint Jerome has not been limited to manuscript illuminations in the margins of the leaves of precious folios but has extended to paintings, sculptures, drawings, woodcuts, etchings, engravings and tapestries in all the known collections in Europe and across America. Tearing misundstood or misidentified animals from their shadow-concealed animals from their former obscurities, he has re-united the Saint with his old companions and re-endowed them with their lost significance. And his magnificent work is redolent of Proust's idealized image, in his 1906 essay *On Reading*, of the peaceful intensities of scholarship, not just because it is highly original and, equally, persuasive, lavishly illustrated with high-quality colour plates and a great number of black and white insets, filled with a sub-text of almost continuous footnotes unrolling down the sides of the clearly printed pages, but also because St Jerome himself was for so many centuries the chief maker of that image, the great exemplar of the life of true scholarship.

We have only to think of Colaninno's Naples masterpiece - Jerome in his small quiet study surrounded by all the familiar talismans for his mind's journey: the hour-glass, the candle, a pair of scales, his quills, his papers and his massive leather-bound, clasped and studded books strewn across his shelves; while he himself has pushed his chair back from the incline of his desk, a momentary respite from his heroic literary labours, in order to attend to his equally heroic companion who is troubled by a thorn in his foot. It has always seemed appropriate that while lesser scholars have to make do with a mere common cat curled up by the fireside, the single-handed translator of the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into Latin, the creator of the Vulgate, should be equipped with a lion.

But Jerome's life had not always been so settled. Born about 341 AD in Strido, a town on the border of Dalmatia, he spent his youth in passionate study of classical Roman literature, broken by serious illness in 373, after which he suffered all the torments of a spiritual crisis and, renouncing pagan scholarship, decided to devote himself to the Holy Scriptures. He retired to the deserts of Chalcis in Syria and, for four years, lived there as a hermit, alternately mortifying himself and, presumably, reading quietly in the shade. He was then ordained at Antioch and spent the rest of his life working upon his great translation, teaching, writing, and vigorously engaging in every theological controversy until his death in a monastery in Bethlehem in 420.

Legend, through some sensible creative confusion with Constantine who, as a saintly old hermit, was plainly unworthy of his genuine companion, later awarded Jerome his lion. But it also presented him with a whole rich bestiary of animals; and it is the penumbra of complicated and often bizarre meanings which surrounds each lizard, or magpie, or gallinule, or chequered hen or harpy that Friedmann, a former professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, has brought to light in the history of art, so brilliantly clarified.

Giovanni Andrea, professor of canon law at Bologna in the first half of the fourteenth century, depicted the lion as the companion of the

Jerome legend, and in so doing he gave the artists of the later Middle Ages one of their few opportunities to study natural history and accurately to depict a wide range of animals in church art. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the early descriptive phases of biology itself arising without some such sanctioned, antecedent, pictorialized interest in animals and plants.

From these beginnings Friedmann first follows, in a general way, the development in art of the Jerome story, mapping the different fortunes of the two clearly defined themes, the saint as scholar and as penitent, through time and across Europe. As the Middle Ages come to an end and the Renaissance begins, Jerome, as a man of learning and wisdom, is emphasized, the unofficial patron saint of the humanists, serene in his study, but the Baroque world enjoyed imagining Jerome in his years of suffering and self-accusation, and portraying his central nightmare, when, whipped by the angels before the throne of God he heard the terrible words "You are not a Christian but a Ciceronian". (Friedmann assures us, however, that years afterwards Jerome was still writing "pure, even idiomatic, Latin, and he could not restrain himself from embellishing his sentences with frequent quotations from his former idol, Cicero.")

"We then come to the heart of Friedmann's massively documented and well-written book, his detailed discussions of Dürer's great engraving of 1514, 'Saint Jerome in His Study' (a dutiful but clear account), Lucas Cranach the Elder's eight versions of Saint Jerome (the biologist springs to life), Bosch's Ghent and Venice pictures (fascinated but half-baffled), Antonello da Messina's 'Saint Jerome in His Study' in the National Gallery (respectful), Francesco di Giorgio's bronze relief of 'St Jerome in Penitence' (a partially rewarded straining of his eyes and our credulity) and Cosimo Tura's 'Saint Jerome in Penitence' and 'Christ Crucified' which were originally one painting (moments of justified wild excitement).

Friedmann's explanations are carefully controlled and systematic, and his argument relies for its effect upon a long series of small correspondences, which command our assent, but here are a few examples of his method. Why, for instance, is a little dog lying asleep beside the lion in the foreground of Jerome's northern baronial study. In Dürer's 1514 picture? Dürer was an admirer of Luther, Friedmann reminds us, but he was also a member of the Nuremberg group of humanists, and Luther had sharply criticized Jerome for his love of pre-Christian writers. In 1514, however, Dürer still hoped for reconciliation within the Church, which is why dog and lion (not quite comatose; it is true). Fidelity and Courage, can still lie down and sleep beside each other in the evening peace of the scholar's room. How very different is Dürer's circa 1521 pen drawing of the penitent 'Saint Jerome in His Study', executed after his full conversion to Luther.

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teachings, where a skeletal, anxious old man stares into the sockets of the skull his own head has almost become, remorseful for the now forbidden imaginings of his joyous literary youth.

Or - a representative problem of a different sort - just what is a prominent fat beaver doing on the floor of Jerome's study in Lucas Cranach the Elder's marvelous 1526 painting? Well, idiosyncrasies of this order in his subjects hardly ever occasion a change in Friedmann's pace. Cranach, sometime Burgo-master of Wittenberg, was an apothecary practising in the city and would have known all about the value of "castoreum", a medicine made from the glands of the beaver, and which was presumably intended to produce a state of mind and body opposite to that symbolized by the beaver itself: spiritual peace attained by the conquest and annihilation of carnal desire. This meaning was itself derived from the legendary behaviour of the hunted beaver - when hard pressed it was believed to castrate itself, and thereby released for higher things, to build undistracted dams in heavenly ponds.

Antonello da Messina's extraordinarily peaceful 'St Jerome in His Study' in the National Gallery, Friedmann points out, is serene in its symbolic details as well as in its overall effect. Not only are there no unsettling reminders of transience - no skull, no hour-glass - but even the peacock's train (Pride and Vanity) is shut, and the bird is therefore displaying its secondary significance, immortality (because it was thought so tough to eat it might well be indestructible); and here the partridge, a Red-legged or French partridge (so called because, unlike the English partridge, it declines to get up and be shot like a gentleman but prefers to desert down the nearest ditch) appears not to be a symbol of Satan (it was thought to have scratched the eggs of Eve) but rather of Christ, but was there some more than an old belief? Friedmann writes, "still current at least as late as the middle of the eighteenth century, to the effect that the wall creeper inhabited old and neglected cemeteries in preference to other places, and that it frequently laid its eggs and raised its young in human skulls". With some scepticism I turned to Buffon's *Natural History* (1749-55), a sophisticated artist at the Esterhazy court of Ferrara, which particularly delighted in allegory, is a kindred spirit for Friedmann, who in turn relishes the fine nuances of his extra-whitened, refugitively-barn-owl, his penitent lion and his frog. But the piece de résistance is the fourth and last creature that Tura introduced into this painting - one of exceeding rarity in religious art, not only in the art of Renaissance Italy, but of all Europe. On a projecting shelf on the left-hand side of the great black tree trunk the contorted lion sits away from all previous art historians, where perches the soft-grey-backed, white-throated, bright-red-winged butterfly bird, the small frequenter

of Northern European rock faces (and, occasionally, stone walls) from whose crevices it wheedles grubs and insects with its long bill; the Wall Creeper. Tura has painted it in winter plumage, and it is only in winter that he might hope to see it in his area of Italy - and with what extraordinary message has he burdened such predilection? The red of the wings, traditionally, would invoke the idea of sacrifice and so of the Passion of Christ, but was there some more than an old belief? Friedmann writes, "still current at least as late as the middle of the eighteenth century, to the effect that the wall creeper inhabited old and neglected cemeteries in preference to other places, and that it frequently laid its eggs and raised its young in human skulls". With some scepticism I turned to Buffon's *Natural History* (1749-55), a sophisticated artist at the Esterhazy court of Ferrara, which particularly delighted in allegory, is a kindred spirit for Friedmann, who in turn relishes the fine nuances of his extra-whitened, refugitively-barn-owl, his penitent lion and his frog. But the piece de résistance is the fourth and last creature that Tura introduced into this painting - one of exceeding rarity in religious art, not only in the art of Renaissance Italy, but of all Europe. On a projecting shelf on the left-hand side of the great black tree trunk the contorted lion sits away from all previous art historians, where perches the soft-grey-backed, white-throated, bright-red-winged butterfly bird, the small frequenter

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St Jerome in his cell: a woodcut by Albrecht Dürer.

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D. J. Enright

In the pursuit of the pristine

By Edward Norman

NICHOLAS LASH:

A Matter of Hope
A Theologian's Reflections on the
Thought of Karl Marx
312pp. Darton, Longman and Todd.
£14.95.
0 232 51494 1

Disillusionment begins at home. The contrast between the institutional Christianity of their own day, and what Christians suppose it might have been, has in every age inspired some to return to what they imagine is the original and authentic Christ, to the unsullied truth. Wise men are not alarmed by the historical, corruptions: they know that men are capable of bringing the most noble ideals into dreadful disrespect through their own inherent imperfection - they know that you cannot judge the truth or virtue of a tradition by its exponents. It is only men in themselves, as individuals, who are known by their fruits and can be judged accordingly. In the doctrine of Original Sin they have a clear explanation of the shambles in the temple: it is a truly humane doctrine, for it recognizes the fallibility of all, the inevitability of a gulf between ideals and behaviour.

The Marxists have no such doctrine of Human Nature to hand; theirs is a creed derived from optimism about men and their autonomous capabilities. Yet they have the same practical difficulty as the Christians. Around them they behold the consequences of the application of their ideas, and they are not always pleased. Lenin is considered to be a shade too harsh, its practical effects recognizable in the herding of opinion. Less philosophically rigorous representations of institutionalized Marxism are wanting in other ways: they are held to be derivatives of incorrect understandings of the founder's opinions, or frank deviations based upon "ideological" error insinuating itself into the Word.

Christian puritans, however, Marxists can't let go of the bone, and they gnaw away until the marrow trickles out. They return, that is to say, to Marx himself - as the worried Christians return to Christ - in the belief that, properly interpreted, the "real" originator will disclose the pristine splendours. Nicholas Lash appears to belong to both categories.

A Matter of Hope, is an intellectually entertaining book. It has the merit of treating Marx seriously, and that is something few Christian writers have been able to do - not because they have all been fearful reactionaries, but because their intellectual equipment has ill-prepared them for the task. Most of the influential figures in the "Christian-Marxist" dialogues of the early 1970s were, on the "Christian" side at least, capable of evaluating Marxist theory only at the level of what is called, in the trade, "vulgar Marxism". Professor Lash, as would be expected from a Cambridge Professor of Divinity and an ex-priest of the Catholic Church, has written a book at the appropriate intellectual level, and his discussion of Marx's ideas makes a valuable contribution to contemporary theological discourse. For a Christian reader seeking a careful analysis of selected aspects of Marx's thought, the present study has immediate utility.

Doubts begin almost at once, however, about the claim, made in Marx and not about the Marxists - "This book is a series of reflections, not on Marx, but on the thought of Karl Marx". It is stated very plainly. Aware of course of the hazards of separating the teacher from the schools he inspired, Professor Lash has, nevertheless, written a book that is largely about the Marxists. As is the way with theologians, an enormous amount of his text consists of direct quotation from their works. Almost all of these are actually Marxist intellectuals. There are a

many references to E. P. Thompson, for example, as there are either to Engels or to Feuerbach. How is it possible to separate the original mind from the living and enduring tradition which transmits its genius? When it comes to Christianity, Lash is quite clear that it is impossible. Christianity, he declares, in agreement with Marx, "has no content of its own" - it is, "or should be, the content" of politics, ethics and art; of law, economics, and physics". In an equation of Christianity with human moral seriousness he goes on to say: "It is the 'content' of whatever it is that constitutes the 'project' of human existence in the world of nature."

With Marx, on the other hand, Lash is sure. The content can be known and has a substance quite unlike some of the disagreeable totalitarian structures that have claimed its authority. (Lenin is in one place characterized, in contrast to Marx, by his "crude simplicities".) The formative Marxists, furthermore, were unaware of Marx's early writings - in which he discusses religion, even if rather sparingly - since most of these were not published until the middle years of the present century. The "real" Marx has yet to be discovered. Lash lays out his treasure map. And what golden goodies await discovery! While admitting some "important contradictions or unresolved tensions" in Marx's thought, he is hugely impressed by its "richness". It has "a fundamental coherence, an internal consistency". It is ever so astonishingly, to be compared with the thought of Newman - about which Professor Lash has, of course, written a distinguished book. There was, in that study of Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, the same qualities found in this new work: a sort of open dialogue with the reader, an over-complication of ideas which in themselves were lucidly rendered by the authors being studied, and a curious sense that the writer is persuading himself as he goes along.

With Marx the result is much more selective than with Newman. Professor Lash is sceptical of the sharp division, made by orthodox Marxists, between the writings of the young Marx, with their "idealist" remnants, and the later works. This is necessary for his thesis. If the mature Marx, with his harsh positivism, really does prove to be inseparable from the young writer who still thought it worth mentioning religion occasionally (if only to dismiss it), then the whole operation becomes, as you might say, a matter of hope. Lash also has the advantage of not believing that Marx's predictions falsified his theories because they were disproved. "The dashing of Marx's hopes", he writes, "is an indication not so much of a flaw in his theoretical analysis, but rather of the extent to which his optimism was unfounded." The reader cannot but be reminded of those early Christians in the deserts of North Africa who came upon a consecrated Host in a Church wrecked some time before by the Vandals: the mildewed decay they thought they saw upon it was not really there - it was just their feeble senses that led them astray.

It is a serious weakness of Lash's outlook that the Marx he knows is derived from the writings of ethical theorists and philosophers, that he concentrates on those texts which they found illuminating, and that he is evidently very little acquainted with Marx's economic and political writings - with the main body of his writing, in fact. This is clear, for example, in his lack of interest in Marx's critique of Political Economy. It hardly gets discussed at all, and the reader is left with the impression, perhaps unjustifiably, that Lash's perception of what the Political Economists were talking about rather corresponds to the simple model devised by their opponents. Similarly, there is scant reference to the problem of necessity: of why, and how logically, Marx connected his critique of social reality to the dynamics of inexorable social trans-

formation. Both are matters which have attracted an enormous volume of scholarly writing by experts in Political Science. Lash, to do him justice, does declare that his reading of Marx has been "eclectic", and of Marx has been "scattered". He says: "I am not an expert either on Marx or on Marxism, and am therefore not equipped to undertake a scholarly examination either of the movement or of the thought of the man from whom the movement takes its name." What, then, of the theological side of the book?

Here Lash is certainly very expert. The theological attitudes brought to bear upon Marx's thought readily accomplished a considerable range of the sort of theological speculation common enough in the past two decades. The edifice of contemporary theology, as everybody knows, is a *troupe* of gigantic proportions. In Lash it is varied, and in an intelligent form. "It is not the theologian's business to tell other people what, or how, to believe," he writes; the trouble with so much existing theology is that it discloses "the dangerous illusion" that "it possesses its truth". There can be no dogmatic theology that is not merely a reflection of "ideology". There are also difficulties in using language about God (or sometimes, as he writes, "God") for both practical and theoretical reasons: "any form of Christian belief, or any system of Christian theology, which supposes itself to be in possession of ready-made theoretical 'solutions' to this twofold dilemma has thereby demonstrated its 'idealist' character." It just is not possible to name God: "but it does not follow that the reality of that which we cannot appropriately name is not there to be experienced not in 'religion' alone, for religion has no content of its own but in the givenness of all responsibly appropriated human experience."

The ground has now been prepared for Lash's contribution to the relationship of Christianity to the "hot religion", and indeed it seems to abolish religion because it is "suspect" of its own anthropomorphism. Properly regarded, Christianity is a version of materialism. Marx, on the other hand, though an atheist, was not a materialist in the vulgar sense - because he attacked money and possessions, at least those belonging to other members of the bourgeoisie - nor in the usually understood philosophical sense. "Religious materialism" is a description which may be applied to the vicious both of Christ and of Marx - though qualifications and limitations of use are rushed on quickly, before the reader has a chance to gasp. A suspicion of double standards hovers around Lash's assessments of Christians and Marxists. The former are always being nagged about their failure to perceive the "real" nature of their faith, for allowing it to support social oppression; but we do not detect anywhere a hint that Marx might have been a tedious creep whose bourgeois life-style and personal relationships were a burden to all around him. The Marxist writers are treated with reverence, though some of their ideas are criticized; the Christian theologians are mostly dismissed as "ideological" and hardly discussed.

There is further inconsistency in this regard. Having said very little about Marx's political philosophy or economic theory, Lash goes on to give a venom of Christianity that is deeply political. Theological culture, he writes, unless it is "socially and economically critical, is inadequately grounded." The concepts of "sin" and "redemption" must be seen as "eminently historical concepts", and not mere moral categories. Unless the Church takes steps of a political character, it will be "helping to perpetuate existing structures of dominion and oppression." Christian "hope" he insists in another place, is "inherently political!" There is no doubt, he says "but that Christian-

ity is, in principle, compatible with commitment to revolutionary struggle." After the revolution - he allows his heroic vision to continue - the Christian "contribution" will take the form of siding with whoever turns out to be "alienated" in the shining new world. Such is the remorseless predictability of the "historical process", and so constant is the contemporary wisdom of the Churches. "Once the stomach has been supplied with a certain quantity of food," Plekhanov observed, "it sets about its work in accordance with the general laws of stomachic digestion."

It is not necessary to be terribly accomplished in Marxist theory to recognize that most of those churchmen and theologians whom Lash would presumably applaud - who have identified Christianity with progressive politics - have merely converted the faith into exactly what Marx said it was: ideology. The reality given very little hope that future exponents of the same craft will emerge with any novelties.

Are Christianity and Marx's thought compatible? Professor Lash, whose admiration for Marx's thinking, as he understands it, is clear, personalizes the question: "Do I or do I not see myself as standing? The answer has to be 'no', because Lash has already laid 'the Marxist tradition' to one side (as one tends to do to horrible political realities) in order to get back to the pure thought of Marx himself. Regrettably the great man was an atheist. But there are chunks of light; more work needs to be done, more "concepts" to be grappled with. "While I am unable to describe myself as a Christian Marxist", he concludes, "I regard the question of the coherence of concepts as an open one." But it's all very difficult. The reader

is left with the implication that Marx's early dismissal of religion was itself inconsistent with other aspects of his mighty analysis. Unfortunately, his criticism of Christianity as necessarily "idealist" did not sufficiently conform to his own criteria of materialist method. He "supposed himself entitled, on the basis of philosophical discourse, and of his experience of one particular historical form of Christianity, to make general assertions concerning the necessarily idealist nature and ideological social function of Christianity." Now that rather lets the cat out of the bag, for there are wide implications for the rest of Marx's thinking. Of which other parts of the structure of his thought may that not also be said? It is not Marx who is among "the forces that shape our culture and our society" - forces whose moral seriousness originally impelled Professor Lash to suppose that Christianity must respond to them. It is the Marxists, those whom he has decided to side-step, who produced them. The seamless robe of intellectual purity has once again fallen into a puddle. But the Marxists had better look out. Having wrecked Christianity, the theologians are beginning to get to work on them now. There won't be much left when they have finished.

Theology and Philosophical Inquiry: An Introduction by Vincent Brümmer (306pp. Macmillan, £13. Paperback, £5.95. 0 33 31030 6 and 0 333 31031 4) aims to introduce theology students with no previous knowledge of philosophy to some of the basic equipment of conceptual inquiry and to show how such concepts are used in a religious context and why they are important for theologians. The book covers four main topics, "Conceptual Inquiry", "Axiological Concepts", "Epistemological Concepts" and "Ontological Concepts".

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The comedy of calamity

By Philip French

S. J. PERELMAN:
The Last Laugh
192pp. Eyre Methuen. £6.50.
0 413 48820 9.

S. J. Perelman began his professional career as a cartoonist with pretensions towards serious comic art, contributing woodcuts and drawings to the numerous magazines of the 1920s like *College Humor*, *Judge* and *Life* that aimed at an undergraduate audience in the universities, and off-campus at what Tom Lehrer has called "old undergrads". The style was pop surrealism, often using collage techniques, with a deliberate exploitation of cliché in both picture and caption (the sort of thing Glen Baxter is reviving in *The Impending Gleam*).

One example depicts three highly stylized student figures, their hats and trousers made of actual printed cotton fabric stuck on to the drawing, looking at a fourth who is cutting triangular pennants (marked "H" and "Y" for Harvard and Yale) and attaching them to his legs. The caption reads:

I'M DOING PENNANTS FOR MY SHINS, BOYS, SNUFFLED THE REPENTANT SENIOR.

The next flash will be Marcus Tullius Cicero boop-dooing his latest torch number, "Can't You Hear Me Calling, Calline?" "What do you think of the Amazon, Captain Benis?" sited one of the pad-and-pencil boys, "I was a fool ever to have married her!" gibbered the explorer. And for the deuce spot Rafael Sabatini and Captain Blood will waw you with "Singing in the Vein".

Most of what constitutes the Perelman style is here - the puns, the pastiche, the wild leaps of logic, the playful wit with clichés, the delight in archaic diction, the love of slang, the manic tone. Missing are the genuine erudition and the Victorian (both unwelcome in humorous journals of that time), and the rhythmic fluency that would hold these elements together. The latter came very quickly.

By the early 1930s, when Perelman returned to the East Coast from his first sojourn in Hollywood, scripting *Monkey Business* and *Horse Feathers* for the Marx Brothers, to start his lifelong association with the *New Yorker*, he had found (the mature style and the form (the five-page sketch) that he would never desert. It is said that he switched to writing when an editor told him the editors were getting so long that the drawings were becoming redundant. This may have happened; Perelman never denied the story. He did say, however, that he formed the view that no one (with the exception of Beethoven, whom he revered) could successfully combine writing and drawing.

The style eventually proved somewhat inflexible, as the autobiographical material shows. He became incapable of dealing directly with his experiences in writing. His travel pieces are almost entirely fiction; he moved around the world mainly on the tourist circuit, the journey being as much a way of assuming his imaginative role as of stirring his imagination. In his introduction Paul Theroux expresses surprise that Perelman was unable to write about his last and most truly disastrous journey, an overland drive from London to Peking. "Frankly," he writes, "the subject was made for him." The truth, however, is that Perelman couldn't abide chaos or discomfort: the calamities "he could handle" as a writer, says Theroux, "the comic imagination, the dream up from serious misadventure. Whenever he was questioned about some appalling experience recounted in a book or article, it turned out to have happened to someone else, or been invented. There is a particularly vivid description in *The Last Laugh* of an encounter in T'ai Chi with a Russian General and a Russian from a village who were a "hellman"

suspended from a silver chain around his throat - a life-sized ceramic bagel sprinkled with ceramic salt, out of which a bite had presumably been taken". Had the author of this piece not himself been Jewish, the reader might have suspected an element of antisemitism. The odd thing is that Perelman never met this man - he had merely heard about someone like him from a friend.

Apart from the lucrative forays to Hollywood and the occasional, mostly unsuccessful, ventures on to Broadway, Perelman stuck to his last for fifty years, and in the process helped alter the face of comedy in the English-speaking world. Few people engaged in comic writing today would not acknowledge some debt to him - one thinks particularly of Woody Allen, Russell Baker and Art Buchwald in America, of Alan Coren, Tom Stoppard, Frank Muir and Dennis Norden in this country.

He thought of himself as a writer, rather than a humorist, and while he believed that Dorothy Parker's description of him as a "humorist writer" (in her introduction to *The Most of S. J. Perelman*) was a misprint for "humorous writer", he made no attempt to have it corrected.

After years of finding himself in anthologies of American humour, he was pleased as Punch (more pleased than Punch) when Irving Howe included a piece of his along with tales by Bellow, Mailer, Singer, Malamud et al in a fat 1977 collection of Jewish-American Stories.

The Last Laugh is his eighteenth book, and like its predecessors it is made up largely of previously published pieces, along with some fragments from the autobiography, *The Hindsight Saga*, which he had spoken about more often than he'd worked on. There are, as always, words one has never heard of or cannot exactly place: Jabots, ichors, lameters, coryphees. There is even a word that the editors of *Oxford English Dictionary* appear uncomfortable with - "supercalif", used inscrupulously with reference to the sex life of Lady Ottoline Morrell: "there is more than an imputation that she cavorted in the supercalif with machos like Bertrand Russell and Augustus John". Presumably those assiduous ladies employed to check every fact and reference that goes into the *New Yorker* must have pondered its meaning. The use of obscure words and the references to long-dead figures from cultural history were part of Perelman's stock-in-trade; it is unlikely that the practice would now be tolerated from anyone else. The editors at the *New Yorker* and Eyre Methuen, however, have let through some uncharacteristic Perelman errors - Chandler and Hammett together at a *Black Mask* dinner in the 1920s (the meeting took place in 1936), Darryl Zanuck still head of production at Warner Brothers in 1935 (he left in 1933), Conan Doyle's second Holmes novel given as *The Sign of the Four* (Perelman was punctilious to a degree (BA with Honours, Brown University, 1923) about such matters, and he is merciless in *The Last Laugh* in his comments on the prose of Victoria Cleland and Stan Gahler Davies).

Most of the pieces stand up well, and none better than "Boromir, You Made the Pants Too Short", a characteristic squib that uses a reference to the shortness of E. M. Forster's review of *Lady Ottoline's Ashes* as a point of departure for a hilarious quest for the late novelist's pants that leads Perelman from King's College, Cambridge, to Kentish Town. The initial tone is wistful, and there is a querulousness running through the book, an anger directed at publishers, young cineastes, would-be writers, nostalgia, anyone connected with the movie business and Hollywood that belies the claims made by Paul Theroux in his introduction that Perelman was "a cheery soul" of equable disposition. He could be excellent company, generous with his time and praise (though seldom with his money), kindly. He could also be witty and casually cruel, unable to

foresee the effect of a chance remark. At various times he estranged Groucho Marx, Dorothy Parker, John O'Hara, James Thurber (all prickly people, of course). But his own family were hurt at the constant use he made of them as butts and comic furniture in his writing. "I am still reading your brutal account of your family's efforts to keep you from being certified as a lunatic," Raymond Chandler wrote to Perelman in 1951, "and by God there are times when you don't speak of them at all nicely."

Nearly all the pieces start brilliantly, some of them peter out ("He always had trouble with endings", William S. Burroughs, editor of the *New Yorker*, said Thursday and they are better taken twice a day after good meals than all together on an empty stomach. Exactly the same thing was said nearly forty years ago by Diana Trilling when an earlier, and by general consent much superior, collection came her way as fiction reviewer of the *Nation*).

Twenty-five of S. J. Perelman's funny pieces - why do they always start so much better than they end? - are collected in a volume called *The Dream Department* but like most occasional humour they are less amusing in mass than taken one at a time.

By an odd coincidence, on the following page in Mrs Trilling's collection of fiction criticism, *Reviewing the Forties*, there is a scathing appraisal of the 1943 party-line novel by the Communist writer Ruth McKenney, to whom Perelman was related by marriage.

Perelman's wife, Laura, was the sister of his old college friend, Nathaniel West, and Ruth McKenney was the sister of West's wife, whom she immortalized as "my sister Eileen". She is one of the people Perelman might well have dealt with and been on with his autobiography, which is represented here by two slight pieces on Hollywood (working in the industry) and brief memoirs of West and Dorothy Parker. Sadly, he tells one far less than he has always been prepared to vouchsafe in conversation, and numerous writers on Hollywood, the Marx Brothers, Nathaniel West and the literary scene in general are indebted to his remarkable memory and skill as a raconteur.

He is notably discreet on political matters, yet it is of importance that many of his close friends - the Wests, Ruth McKenney, and her husband Richard Brautigan (one-time editor of *New Masses*), Dashiell Hammett, Lillian Hellman and Dorothy Parker among them - were Communist Party members or fellow travellers. In the West memoir, Perelman writes of "my cousin's try house in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, in 1938 from a left-wing journalist, Mark Silver, who had tried to launch a neo-do-well brother in the chicken business there." Mark Silver was Michael Gold, a hard-line Stalinist. Gold had enjoyed great success with his proletarian novel *Jews without Money* and had been able to buy this farm for his deadbeat brother, who was then employed as doorman and lift attendant at the New York office of the Communist Party party. *The Daily Worker*. As the facts behind this one sentence indicate, there is a whole area of social history and personal knowledge that Perelman hasn't used. This is not because he had anything to conceal about his own politics. It is more a matter of the kind of material his comic style is capable of handling. For instance, mention the swindler George Coward that West edited for William S. Burroughs, where he published the book, and he wrote, the Joycean stream-of-consciousness account of Hollywood life "Scenario". This hilarious *de-la-fora* had an enormous influence on West, and he behind *The Day of the Locust*.

Perelman never joined the Communist Party and could not read



Evelyn Waugh's 1923 ink drawing (above) of a man with one foot in the cradle and one in the grave decorates Robert L. Montgomery's article, "The Case of Black Mischief: Evelyn Waugh vs The Tablet", which appears in the current issue of the *Library Chronicle* of the University of Texas at Austin (issued quarterly at a subscription rate of \$18.50 and obtainable from the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin). Waugh's third novel *Black Mischief*, published in 1932 two years after his conversion to Catholicism, was denounced by the then editor of the *Tablet*, Ernest Oldmeadow, as "a disgrace to anyone professing the Catholic name"; Dr Marie Stopes, too, attacked Waugh's "unsavoury tale". Leading Catholics, including Father D'Arcy, wrote in Waugh's defence, but it was left to the author himself, in a thirteen-page open letter to Cardinal Bourne, the Archbishop of Westminster, to deal Oldmeadow the coup de grace. Assuming the posture of a loyal and humble son of the Church, Waugh demolishes Oldmeadow's objections step by step, making particular play with the climactic scene of the novel in which Prudence, the heroine, is unhappily consumed at an African banquet. "The *Tablet* quotes the fact that she was stewed with pepper, as being in some way a particularly lubricious process. But this is a peculiar prejudice of the *Editor's*, attributable, perhaps, like much of his criticism, to defective digestion. I cannot matter whether she was roasted, grilled, braised or pickled, cut into sandwiches, or devoured hot-on-toast as a savoury."

poking fun at the cheap left-wing rhetoric of Odets's *Waiting for Lefty* in his famous playlet "Waiting for Lefty". But there is a strong political feeling underlying the satirical thrust of his writing. From his childhood in Providence, Rhode Island, growing up in a Jewish immigrant family befriended by ill-fortune and exposed to anti-Semitism, he developed a powerful sense of social injustice that never left him. Moreover, he always felt a great loyalty to his friends on the left, however little he may have responded to their ideologies. He occasionally contributed comic pieces to *New Masses* before the war, and one 1935 sketch, about upright Dick Rover exposing radicals on the campus of his alma mater, Effluvia College, ends: "And there, face to face with success and their new destiny, let us leave them until the next episode, 'The Rover Boys and Their Young Finks'." There is an echo of this forty years later: in a bitter piece about Hollywood in *The Last Laugh*, McCarthy's "tumbrels" rolled and the mournful cry of the fink - "Bring out your dead here!" - resounded in the streets. In a memoir about the staging of the musical *One Touch of Venus* (which he wrote with Ogden Nash and Kurt Weill in 1943), Perelman changes the names of all those to whom some opprobrium is attached with the single exception of the director, Ella Kazan. In 1952 Kazan became a permanent parish to Perelman's circle for his collaboration with the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

Perhaps the only way Perelman could have left us the valuable autobiography he had within him would have been for him to have sat down for a week and talked to a sympathetic interviewer. As it is, one of the most delightful pieces in *The Last Laugh* is a reflection on the problems of writing memoirs and a comic fable about the nature of the art. Called "And Then The Whining Schoolboy With his Saucer", it turns on a number of assignments in a Providence teachers

This year's *Pick of Punch* (1929) Hulton-Decca. £7.50. 0 9 146380 0. ends with "A New Year's Message from Dame Edna" in which she declares: "All that I can now pray for is 1981: that my bid for *The Times* is 1981: that my bid for *The Times* is 1981." The large collection of comic pieces preceding this apparently thwarted appeal to the divine includes Keith Waterhouse on Sinbad the Sailor, Paul Jennings on the Horse in the Lavatory, Paul Theroux on Left Luggage, Melvyn Bragg on Martin Scorsese, George Melly on John Lennon, and Robert Morley, Mike Breckley, Michael Messing and Anthony Burgess on "Success". There is a man he knew who married someone because he wanted her to take the break-up of a long and passionate affair found that in fact the thing she minded most was

JONATHAN GATHORNE-HARDY:
Love, Sex, Marriage and Divorce
384pp. Cape. £8.50.
0 224 01602 4

The British Library Catalogue places this volume in the section on Interpersonal Relationships and indeed, as the blurb reminds us, "We are all in some way bound up in Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's subject". Since "his conclusions... are far-sighted, original and tremendously exciting", we had better turn first to the back of the book. There is, alas, no list of answers but, by Jove (to whom we will return later in considering Mr Gathorne-Hardy's chapter on Saxon Sexuality and the Rage to Divorce in Ancient Rome), there are twenty-six pages of references showing how to find them. These take the following form: chapter by chapter, page by page and paragraph by paragraph, the author cites the primary sources from which he has drawn his examples and on which he has based his observations. The passages to which the references belong are indicated by their openings, and closing words, with dots between, thus: "Syphilis may... sexual emancipation", "Men and women... on moral grounds", "Professor Edmund Leach... in grave danger", "After a month... full blast", "Alex Comfort... for sex itself", "By the 1970s... several orgasms", "A survey of... over-90s masturbated", and, wonderfully, "Depending on how... one-third will". There are also nine pages of appendices.

For Mr Gathorne-Hardy has sought to write a scholarly book. This does not mean that he has a special veneration for scholars: the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure is thanked for providing "much valuable information, some of which I was reluctantly compelled to jettison", together with those writers to whom the author is particularly grateful "even though I did not always agree with them". None the less Mr Gathorne-Hardy has pored over the likely, and less likely, sources, undisturbed by the fact that "initially it seems to involve grasping a truly enormous amount of sex" from *An Anatomia to The Future With Micro Electronics, The Unhatched Byron* to "Matched Pairs of Hermaphrodites: Behavioural Biology of Sexual Differentiation from Chromosomes to Gender Identity" (*Engineering and Science*, California Institute of Technology, 1970), *Glamour* magazine and *Population Trends* to "Couple Strain in Communal Households: A Fair-Game Model of the Separation Process" (*Journal of Social Issues*, 1976). He has diligently worked through the writings of some very curious people: for example, Dr Albert Ellis, tentatively described as "the distinguished if eccentric American sexologist", and the Swiss Jungian psychiatrist Adolf Guyenbühl-Craig. Formidable personages were confronted: "Bleeker Alter", a penetrating New York divorce lawyer, the happily named Philip Moore-Cudley, believing in and practising "open marriage", and Dr Billie himself, who, questioned about Rational Psychology, "instantly became quite violent".

Dr Ellis maintains that people don't learn things but teach themselves. "It was a lot of crap to say you learned to walk... it's a baby you for two years and then let it loose, let teach itself". At which Mr Gathorne-Hardy, touchingly and, let us hope, silently, wondered if this had ever been done.

Relations and acquaintances were also pressed into service. "I tell you, Mr Hardy, I shall go to my sister just like that if I have any more of it" (but "they've been together over 50 years... they are not actually married... the photographs on the bookcases are false"). There is a man he knew who married someone because he wanted her to take the break-up of a long and passionate affair found that in fact the thing she minded most was

having left behind her cast-iron frying pan". Mrs Moore-Cudley described the complications of her life with Philip and Sally W. spoke of her outrage at Martha S's divorce. (Sure enough, within the year three more of that group of friends had "started divorcing".) From time to time we hear of Derek, a slightly drunk, fairly over-excited Ipswich psychiatrist, whom Mr Gathorne-Hardy meets at a party given by his sister, Derek and his wife "had just got deeply into open marriage", or, rather, Derek had. Mr Gathorne-Hardy's sister sounds rather entertaining: at another of her parties, twelve pages later, when we discover Derek again, looking "frightful" - lined and "about seventy" - she observes, "Yes, they're together again. Poor Derek - it's a very closed marriage indeed".

So what has been Mr Gathorne-Hardy's intention? "It seemed to me", he explains, "that something very important might be happening in Western society, a watershed compared with the advent of Christianity (though quite different). This revelation prompted and concluded the work he put into his book, which we are invited to regard "as an analysis of love, marriage, sex and divorce in the West today". The scope of the venture is in fact less ambitious than we might at first think; this is not the sort of epic produced by Toynbee, Needham, Gibbon and Lévi-Strauss, for by "analysis" the author means "psychoanalysis", and what he has done is to describe a process of discovery, "partly finding out things I didn't know - discovering, for instance, that the apparently chaotic period following divorce or the break-up of an affair was not without pattern; or some of the facts about oral sex", but, more, beginning to understand the particular significance of "six or seven areas". Mr Gathorne-Hardy was inspired to embark on this undertaking after his own divorce and three-year course of analysis.

The first of the six or seven ques-

tions which he finds most intriguing is whether or not there has been "a sexual revolution" during the past three decades. What with one thing and another - the Celtic Queen Medbba, with her husband, Official and Unofficial Lord, advising Princess Findachair to sleep with an attractive messenger, the "powerful feminist movement" in first and second-century Rome (Juvenal's Maria "with spear in hand and breasts exposed, takes to pig-sticking"), migration from villages in seventeenth-century England and eighteenth-century France at least as frenzied as that in twentieth-century Britain and America, "enormous numbers of whom... 900,000, with 900 brothers and 900 houses of ill-fame", that is, says Mr Gathorne-Hardy, "no staff, just beds" in eighteenth-century London, the invention in 1564 of ingenious protective devices to ward off venereal disease (the author is particularly interested in the relationship between social and cultural change and technological innovation - the connection between increases in syphilis and the importation of dildoes, the Continental fashion for oral intercourse and the introduction of the bidee, and later, the debt owed by the vibrator industry to the teachings of sex therapists) - what with one thing and another, we are led to the conclusion that the "permissiveness" of the late twentieth century is not in itself a new phenomenon. It is only striking in its pervasiveness. "From time to time", Mr Gathorne-Hardy declares, "elitist circles throughout the last four hundred years have enjoyed sexual and moral relaxations of this sort... our century, particularly the last thirty-five years, has seen the mass become the elite. All we are seeing, though on a large scale, is a perfectly familiar development."

The second area of significance is the "ideology of the Sexual Revolution" and the genesis of obsession. (The author has warned us in the preface that the going will be hard.) His inquiries have brought him to the view that "our ideology of sex contains three very Victorian ideas". These are (briefly) "laissez-faire, religious preoccupation and reverence for the purity of women". Charles Kingsley, Havellock Ellis and D. H. Lawrence are cited as the principal authorities. It is not clear from Mr Gathorne-Hardy's exposition whether he holds the Victorians to be equally responsible for infusing our "ideology of sex" with three more, equally powerful notions: engineering, duty and romantic love. He is particularly enthusiastic about engineering (the recommendations of the Flanston Report have not altogether fallen on stony ground) and he is obviously fascinated by Dr Alfred Kinsey. As Kinsey's colleague, Wardell B. Pomeroy, first pointed out, Dr Kinsey's basic drive was that of a collector. As a young zoology professor he amassed four million gall wasps; he was apparently equally obsessed with his library of erotica (no statistics given by Mr Gathorne-Hardy); he hoped to obtain 100,000 interviews, to discover "with no moral bias, what people did sexually" (the only got 18,000). Mr Pomeroy has described the code in which he and his mentor discussed and recorded these interviews: "I might say to Kinsey while we were going up in a public elevator, 'my last history liked figure 2 better than CM, although OO in CX made him very ER.' Translated: 'my last history liked intercourse with animals better than with his wife (this book is not for the squeamish), but mouth-genital contact with an extra-marital partner was very arousing'."

Dr Kinsey's fascination with numbers and scores, his interest in "outlets" (Biologically there is no form of outlet which I will admit is unnatural) and his belief, zealously and patiently expounded, in the links between satisfied sexual appetite and energy, vivacity, spontaneity and alertness, continue to inform the writings of his successors, whose works Mr Gathorne-Hardy has diligently

fileted. Dr Alex Comfort's *Joy of Sex* was apparently heavy work and is dismissed with a sentence or two but the point is illustrated by lengthy quotation from Shere Hite, Masters and Johnson, and assorted extracts from such magazines as *Rouge*, *Playboy* and *Forum* (from the latter three and a third page of an extraordinary letter, headed *Sleeping Vaginas*, describing the beneficial effect on a circle of late middle-aged women of substituting mutual masturbation for bridge: "I've gone from 162 to 144 pounds by switching my former sweet tooth to a sexual outlet."

Mr Gathorne-Hardy has most to say, however, about the pernicious influence of romantic love upon our sexual attitudes. He begins with the troubadours (the ideal of "court love" and being "anti-marriage"), passes on to the Abingdonian heresy and what is called "an Arabic element". We move, with due acknowledgment to Denis de Rougemont's *Passion and Society* (published in America as *Love in the Western World*), from Malory, Dante ("... one should perhaps pause at Dante"), Cervantes, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Milton, Sterne to, eventually, John Updike ("... the central morality of the book... is the morality of marriage"). The punishment is divorce (also the final act out of the sin); ahead lies remarriage and a return to the central morality again. We learn about "love readiness", the "specificity of love" ("the fact we choose one person rather than another") and the "ultimate love" that is love of ourselves, by reference to Tristan and Isolde, Bertrand Russell and divorcees who have become addicted to seducing timid professors. The upshot is that Mr Gathorne-Hardy decides that romantic love is a bad thing.

The third significant theme is feminism. Here the author considers how far it has gone, whether it can go any further and whether a feminist revolution can ever succeed. There are wonderfully dreadful quotations in these chapters, including paragraphs of vox pop. From a father sharing the birth of his child: "I did not remain a logical adviser, but rather a catalyst, acting through the spontaneity of love... The perspiration was rolling off my head... I was beside myself with joy. I had given birth along with my wife. I was exhausted... It was glorious, just glorious... ecstasy..." (And his wife? "It was very much a joint effort"). After much to-ing and fro-ing, Mr Gathorne-Hardy was just about to conclude that there are still gains to be made in women's lot and that the solution is "the shared society", when he came across the work of Dr Steven Goldberg: "The shock was more than I could contain." Dr Goldberg's case, founded on the observation that in cultures like the Mundugumor, Tshambuli, Arawak and Mbuti, where anthropologists have established that women assume the most important roles, those roles are not in fact thought of as the most important, and, if they become so, men take over. Goldberg's argument is bolstered by studies of human hermaphrodites, whose "foetal hormonalisation" has triumphed over later "socialization", that is, brought up as females, they none the less prefer "rough and tumble games and male toys" and show little enthusiasm for motherhood, which is hardly surprising if it is anything like as chancy as Mr Gathorne-Hardy's book suggests.

Love and Marriage having been dealt with, there remain Divorce and Sex. The sedulous on divorce turn out to be less muddling than those on sex, if only because there are more statistics (Appendix 12: Effects of Divorce Compared to Death; Appendix 5: First Years, the most difficult - adjusted UK figures, etc), even though they are often contradictory (Appendix 4: The gap between separation and divorce... is put at 4.6 years by Robert Coles; by Nicky Hart at 2.9. Say between 2 and 5 years.) Divorce is judged to

Beware the watershed

By Janet Morgan

The Wedding Photograph: June 1921

Their approach to the world was formal. They called each other Mr. and Mrs.

Clear light fell between them; air, the sun on the whitewashed house.

She wore a picture hat. They never told each other anything.

He was a small man, but not terrified. They seemed to know where they were going.

What we mean by marriage: flesh and confidence would have struck them utterly vulgar.

There are no children in this picture. But they did have children.

This husband and this wife did not argue. Did the husband have secret pictures of French dancers?

Did the wife stand by the window, as if, somehow, there were something she had forgotten?

When they touched, the tips of their fingers were cool, and they knew enough not to expect too much.

Entirely proper, their distance, not like the ocean, or the space between planets.

Theirs was the distance of someone who says, "Wait, I was trying to tell you something."

Did they come to a bad end? I don't think so. The weight of her picture hat held them together.

If they came to a bad end, it was so unlike ours, we, or they, would call it something different.

Mary Gordon

be very painful and the procedure ripe for compassionate tidying-up.

Sex is much more complicated; and here as elsewhere Mr Gathorne-Hardy has put a great deal of effort into his compilation. And that is precisely the trouble. He is at his best when gently ridiculing the pompous (Shere Hite's *Report* on the importance of necessity for and means of achieving, largely without the intervention of men, female enjoyment by women), gently deflating the melodramatic (Nell Dunn's description of Christmas in the country, with her lover Dan, her husband, her husband's girlfriend, Dan's wife, his wife's boyfriend and the kids... "kippers for Christmas dinner and lots of wine - it should have been fun and yet it wasn't"; to which Mr Gathorne-Hardy observes, "... it could have been the kippers...") and pouncing on the revealing expression ("involved" with) is described as an "absolutely typical post-crack-up phrase").

Sadly, he is not satisfied with making miscellany out of "self-help books, sex therapists and promoters of communes"; he has tried to write a serious tome and, in doing so, has become as ponderous as his sources. He invents irritating catchphrases: the "Privilege Bugle" for the generation born between the late 1920s and the 1940s, the "crude gene" of intolerance of sex in Christianity, the "laser beam of change" of increasing divorce, and so on. Some of these

are impossible to explain - "the fallacy of the rigid swing" for instance - because they are no more than labels stuck on half-baked ideas. Sometimes we are completely baffled and Mr Gathorne-Hardy's convoluted prose does not help. What, for example, are we to make of this: "I talked to a man of forty-two who had two women alternately week by week and he said he had been forced to have two orgasms a night every night for eleven months"? The mathematics are extremely confused.

Nor is it easy to follow an argument that consists of erecting straw men, topping them and then standing them up again, especially when we cannot be sure whether the straw men have emerged from the texts which the author cites or whether he has fabricated them himself. Take, for example, his discussion of Professor Edmund Leach's observation that a secure and stable family is a necessary condition for the efficient transmission of values and customs and of Dr Jack Dominian's belief that "the welfare of societies and nations depends on the well-being of the individual marriage and family". Mr Gathorne-Hardy uses these references to demolish the assumptions that a) the Roman Empire collapsed because stable family life collapsed and b) that the Western world will go the same way for the same reasons. But are those his assumptions or those of Leach and Dominian? He certainly does not deter-

mine that Leach and Dominian have made any such statements.

It is not so much the small slips ("practise" is relentlessly spelt thus; names are misspelt) that make us wary of this book's claims to scholarship but a pervasive sloppiness of argument. There is too much seeing the past in terms of the present (the word "contemporary" is used to mean "now"), and too much innuendo ("typically, more is known about that in the 17th century than is known today"). The more earnest Mr Gathorne-Hardy shows himself to be (all that laborious reading and all those appendices, the adjustment of tables and the conversion of prices - an evening at Plato's Retreat, a New York partouze, costs \$25 or £10.42), the more uncomfortable we become, so that by the end of his book we cannot take him seriously any longer. "Civilization [is] unconsciously gathering itself to meet some tremendous crisis... human beings are reaching for 'unconscious potentiality' in sexual matters as in everything else, says Mr Gathorne-Hardy, throwing in references to extra-sensory perception, rightward swings in general elections, etc. The exhausted reader knows that Mr Gathorne-Hardy hasn't proved anything and that he can go on and on like this for pages more. Just as people do, in fact, when they are discussing private woes and their cosmic implications. Not, then, a book for Christmas or anything but a profoundly depressing New Year.



"Would you pass the conversation please?" remarks the Calwoman to the Calman in one of the cartoons in *How about a little quarrel before bed!* (Unnumbered pages. Methuen. £2.50. 0 413 48830 6) which shows that the cartoonist has lost none of his brilliance at capturing the comic nuances in the bitter-sweet exchanges of the battle of the sexes. Here he gives expression to another paradox in the life of the couple.

Mark Twain and his 'English' novels

By Marcus Cunliffe

Samuel L. Clemens (or "see Mark Twain", in the way that indexes and encyclopaedias shunt us to the more famous pen-name) was born in 1835 and died in 1910. It is generally felt that Twain's best work was done in his forties and fifties, ranging from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) to *The Tragedy of Pudd'n-head Wilson* (1894), with *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) and *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) probably the central summit of his achievement. Sam Clemens quit Hannibal, Missouri, before he was a grown man, and later on went back there only to gather notes for the autobiographical *Life on the Mississippi*. By then he was a well-established resident of New England, living in Hartford, Connecticut, in prosperous proximity to such other celebrities as Harriet Beecher Stowe. However, it is also generally assumed that Twain was a profoundly American writer, drawing his truest inspiration from the great Mississippi Valley of boyhood and youth - the realm of his remembered, inmost heartland.

If this is so, how are we to deal with what might be called his two "English" novels? *The Prince and the Pauper* was published in December 1881. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* came out eight years after, at the end of 1889. They thus belong chronologically to Twain's most productive period. Do they belong in more important respects? In any case, are they a closely related pair? Several answers - not necessarily congruent one with another - have been offered by critics and biographers. These can be summarized; then a few more may be added.

The first argument is that the further Twain departed from America, in time, space and theme, the less sure was his touch. *The Prince and the Pauper* was set not merely in England but in the past, one in the mid-sixteenth century and the other in a semi-mythical Arthurian kingdom of around 600 A.D. Twain liked to read about the past, whether in the Waverley novels of Sir Walter Scott, the diary of Samuel Pepys or Thomas Carlyle's fulminations in *The French Revolution*. He boned up on English history, looking for local colour and for clues to how people actually spoke. But he was not a historian by instinct. Precise accuracy was unimportant to him. Sometimes he attributed to one era behaviour he knew of in connection with a different period. He defended himself by arguing that if the behaviour (usually brutal) had been a feature of a later, supposedly more civilized time, then it was reasonable to infer that such conduct existed earlier.

Twain scholars are apt to brush aside *The Prince and the Pauper*. They may grant that the novel is tighter in construction and more consistent in tone than much of Twain's fiction, including *A Connecticut Yankee*. Otherwise, they tend to classify it with *The Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1896), Twain's subsequent venture into his deepest romance, as irrelevant to his deepest concerns. *The Prince and the Pauper* is in this view not "American" or too obliquely so to carry conviction. We are told that Twain yielded to Hartford neighbours who begged him to put his talents to higher use than mere slapstick. He did indeed endeavor to present a reasonably authentic picture of the England of Henry VIII and Henry's half-brother, Edward VI, imparting (in the "boy" claim of the subtitle) moral lessons for "young people of all ages". The publication date fitted in with the Christmas gift season. The "historical" narrative style Twain concocted was almost free from Americanisms. He considered publishing the book anonymously; and a reviewer in the *Atlantic* even, it is said, remarked that "no one would suspect that this was Mark Twain". If his name was withheld from the title-page, Twain did do this with *Joan of Arc*, introducing it as *Joan's* magazine serial with his own authorship concealed.

to deny an essential identity.

The Connecticut Yankee has been far more thoroughly worked over by critics, yet often with the intent to account for the book's uncertainty of touch. The London *Spectator* disparaged the novel on publication in 1889 as "coarse and clumsy". An Edinburgh newspaper said it was "a lecture in disguise of monarchical institutions and religious establishments, and in praise of Yankee cuteness and Wall Street chicanery as compared to the simple fidelity... of the knightly ideal". Though such dismissals have been commoner in Britain than in the United States, we can trace a recurrent notion that when Twain stayed too far from home, literally, he lost his way.

A second approach is to maintain that while the *Yankee* is a considerably more interesting work, both novels fit perfectly well into the Twain canon. *The Prince and the*

cally identical to the exploitative entrepreneur of nineteenth-century Britain or America. Certainly the parallels with his modern world were specified, to Twain's hearty approval, in the illustrations supplied by the American artist Dan Beard for the first edition. (Tennyson, the Poet Laureate, and author of the Arthurian *Idylls of the King*, appeared as the wizard Merlin. The American "robber baron" Jay Gould was caricatured as a medieval slavemaster.)

Much of this commentary is concerned with the complexities of Clemens/Twain. Henry Nash Smith and Justin Kaplan have analysed Twain's increasing difficulty in supplying any book. *The Prince and the Pauper* was four interrupted years in the making. *A Connecticut Yankee* involved a still more distracted struggle. Twain was preoccupied with the Paige typesetting machine, on which he staked his and his wife's resources

quit the war, seceding from the seceders, he in hindsight called his decision wise, the United States being the "sole country nameable in history or tradition where a man is a man and manhood the only royalty". The democratic ethos is obviously a major element in *A Connecticut Yankee*. In the book, Twain's farcical-horrible "battle"-memory is reversed, becoming a conflict between the modern Union and the feudal Confederacy of aristocracy-and-Church.

The blend of criticism and biography has been a conspicuous feature of Twain scholarship. Not surprisingly, his writing is, to a degree unusual among authors, personal in tone and at least implicitly autobiographical. Twain's unevenness, his abrupt shifts of plot, the jump from joke to sobriety, and from one level of humour to another, prompt us to seek explanations in the contrarieties of Clemens

wish we had some of England's reverence for the old & great."

Not long afterward, in 1875, Twain contributed an anonymous satire, "The Curious Republic of Gondour", to the *Atlantic Monthly*. The essay amounted to a condemnation of American-type universal suffrage, and a definite preference for a society graded through education and traditional wealth like that of Britain. In his imaginary paradise of Gondour, every citizen had one basic vote. But a person could receive up to nine votes; the additions were reckoned on an ascending scale of educational attainment plus affluence. In a letter of 1877 Twain, probably without any tinge of irony, asserted that "Republican Government, with a sharply restricted suffrage, is just as good as a Constitutional monarchy with a virtuous & powerful aristocracy; but with an unrestricted suffrage it ought to... perish because it is founded in wrong & it is weak & bad & tyrannical".

By 1881, when he finished *The Prince and the Pauper*, Twain's estimate of republican democracy was more favourable, at least by the negative gauge of Reformation England. Edward as prince and monarch, hitherto utterly ignorant of the miseries of the poor, begins to learn only when thrown among beggars and thieves. The lesson takes a while to sink in: "Carve me this rable to rags!" is his imperious cry on being rescued from a mob. Still, Edward does eventually realize that "kings should go to school to their own laws... and so learn mercy". All ends happily enough. Tom Canty the pauper and other worthy persons are properly rewarded for their loyal services. Though Edward died after only a few years on the throne, Twain concedes that his reign was "singularly merciful for those harsh times". Edward's courage is never doubted; nor are his innate intellect, most and decency.

Anglophilia, we are told, mysteriously during the 1880s in Twain's life and then to fury. *Give way to The People's History of the English Aristocracy*, a book set by Twain in 1887 by its radical English author, George Standring. Standring edited a magazine called *The Republican*, and insisted that hereditary privilege was a fatal impediment to the development of democracy in Britain. The same argument, colored by *Triumph of Democracy* (1886), a hymn of praise to America by the Scottish-born magnate Andrew Carnegie. Twain, thanking Carnegie for the book in 1880, misnamed it "The Triumphant Republic", and claimed it "helped to fire me up" for the writing of *A Connecticut Yankee*.

Twain's pendulum-swing towards Anglophobia, if that is what it is, can also be inferred from his touchy response to various pronouncements by Matthew Arnold, who unlike that other distinguished critic, Howells, was not an old friend of Twain's. In various articles and lectures of the 1880s, Arnold decided that the United States was not distinguished, or "interesting". Americans lacked reverence; a deficiency manifest in their "addition to the funny man". Twain had at the outset conceived *A Connecticut Yankee* as a light, deliberately anachronistic burlesque poking fun at outworn chivalry and supplanting it with modern industrial revolution and the equivalent of Carnegie's *Don Quixote*. This approach is still evident in the opening chapters, and intermittently thereafter.

But Twain's anger, fuelled by other books like W. B. H. Lecky's *History of European Morals*, then impels him to denounce the past from the vantage-point of modern America. Countering "reverence" with caustic irreverence, he adopts the unsophisticated Yankee mechanic Hank Morgan as his spokesman. Twain-as-Morgan heaps abuse upon "king, nobility and gentry, idle, unproductive, acquainted mainly with the life of wealth and destroying, and of no use or value in any rationally constructed world". They are "abjected in his tale by a priest-

In the picture

By John Naughton

TERRY FINCHER and TONY LYONCH:
The Fincher File
197pp. Quarell. £11.95.
0 7043 2293 5

Photographers are notoriously inarticulate. There are exceptions, of course - one thinks of Edward Weston and Cecil Beaton - but, by and large, photographers' pictures have to speak for them. That this should be true for the major artists of the medium is perhaps not surprising. But it is somewhat astonishing that those who, like successful news photographers, have lived through and photographed the most horrific events of the century are so speechless about them.

Terry Fincher is a case in point. For a quarter of a century he has been everywhere the action was - Suez, Cyprus, the Arab-Israeli wars, Aden, Biafra, Vietnam. At home, he has photographed Royalty, politicians, film stars and just about every other kind of celebrity. Now, at the age of fifty, he has published a volume of memoirs, the text of which - even with the ministrations of a professional writer, Tony Lyonch - is remarkable only for its banality. Leaving home (and his young wife June) for the Suez invasion, for example, he recalls feeling

very proud of myself at that moment, but as I walked along windy Fleet Street, once more, I was already missing June and our cosy flat, and this feeling turned quickly to loneliness. However, I knew there was no turning back and my spirits had lifted again by the time I reached the War Office. In Whitehall, where I was officially sworn in as a war correspondent, next stop was London Airport.

Next stop was always London Airport. It seems so much so that the Fincher's home life was threatened by his job. The roving existence of the war photographer took its inevitable toll. Fincher would be away for months, then home for a weekend, then off again. And there was another woman.

Returned to England from Aden in August with my personal problems still unresolved, I was still in love with both women and wanted to be with both. The situation seemed bleak, if not hopeless.

graph the Maharishi Mahesh Yoga in India, whence he journeyed to cover a small war in Sikkim. From there, he went on to the Yom Kippur War, and then back to the bosom of his family - by which time the Other Woman had, it seems, mysteriously dropped out of sight, never to be mentioned again.

One brings this up not out of any desire to dwell on Mr Fincher's private life but because it illustrates the fundamentally superficial nature of his account. For his aim is clearly to produce something more enduring than a set of captions to his often memorable photographs. But the text which purports to explain something of the man behind the camera rarely penetrates below the level attained by the ghosted memoirs of theatrical celebrities.

It could be, however, that the brittle superficiality of Fincher's account is significant, in the sense that it reveals not literary incompetence but something essential about his personality. There is a strong case for believing that successful news photographers must be people whose experiences do not sear them emotionally or intellectually. They must, in a sense, be blank slates on which the world writes and, having writ, moves on. How otherwise could they do the kind of work they do? On evacuation from Xuan Loc in Vietnam, for example, Mr Fincher watched a small girl fall to her death from the rescue helicopter. The child's mother, who had witnessed this terrible accident, was weeping uncontrollably on the floor of the aircraft. Fincher, consummate professional that he is, photographed her and, having done so, moved on to his next assignment. The resulting photograph is, of course, "excellent" in the way that such photographs always are - striking, shocking, moving, sad. But one feels ashamed to look upon it. Many of Fincher's photographs are like that: an American GI weeps quietly in some corner of Vietnam; a starving Biafran child sucks frantically on a withered nipple; a distraught Egyptian woman cradles aching after a car bearing the body of her dead son.

Mr Fincher is someone who can photograph such things one day, and the next photograph the actress Julie Ege in the nude, or Princess Margaret showing a bit of elegant leg in London Zoo's Panda, and still sleep at night. The greatest deficiency of *The Fincher File* is that it doesn't attempt to explain how he does it.

Christmas Incident

That season of good-will it was in some ways comic; Real snow had sealed us in the village this was peace To have no call to be distracted by a soul Snug with our families and nearest neighbours.

Our ritual gestures ticked a laugh, our repetitions Tinkled like glass-bell baubles; silver shapies were padded With chocolate motor-cars; we hung the tannenbaum With tinsel crystals could not find the doll.

A girl was sick upstairs; before, we could be merry We took our kisses and our conchance-heavy parcels To her oil-heated room; we could not understand The chill, we said, and wondered if we'd brought it.

Her bleached-pale hair, her grey undazzled face were still; It seemed she could not see or read our wrappings: The blunted, holly-primed and our soap-sudded Magi Were boring in the stare of her sad eyes.

When, later, we were asked to leave the feast to find her (Saying we thought into her big advertisement To find it true) we doubted if she had pretended To be so foreign and so dumb and muddled.

It wasn't easy to believe her Christmas picture - Spelling our pleasure in the glittering diamond day - Those drifts of loneliness that leant against her heart, And sent her, quiet and cold, into the colder snow.

We tried her friend, a part-time chandler, obviously Shot for his Christmas. Just a fit of adolescence, Her bad a snip. Well, her footsteps seem to go Towards the river, silly little creature!

Soon we were searching for the lost and fellow searchers To tell each other she was safe and so were we From head-lines; they had found her at the candle-waxy pond Fishing for something; happy it seemed; exultant.

'And did she hook out what she wanted then, what was it?' Her fingers froze for the lost doll beneath the sugar frost. Not finding it she threw it there herself - to salt the stream! We passed the wool-flaked windows and the sprayed-on churches Embarrassed by the triteness of her truth.

Children are not afraid of common names or buried dolls; Her genuine story was as genuine as wheat-seed. The young ones have a gift for finding clichés. Fresh as the first attempt at ice in paradise; it was us grown-ups, Garbling her history with cotton-wool who drove her mad! Once she had found the thing she threw it back for sanity and keeps.

Jane Freeman



The prince and the pauper - an illustration to the first edition of 1881.

hood (mostly symbolized by Merlin) that is both credulous and unscrupulous: a Twainian composite, embodying his prejudices against Roman Catholicism as well as the established Church of England, not to mention Mormonism and Christian Science. His principal conscious target was privilege, supercilious, parochially narrow England, his principal intended contrast an America of vigorous freedom.

Scholars offer various theories to account for his renewed politeness towards England. Few could deny an outright republican find himself paying lavish tribute to Queen Victoria - a unique monarch, he said, surpassing the virtuous young Edward VI in her dedication to "lofty ideals" - on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee in 1897. One argument is that with old age Twain became more radical and more focused, that his new targets - Russia's Tsarist régime, the horrors perpetrated in the Congo by Leopold of the Belgians - made the offences so supposedly committed by a Matthew Arnold appear negligible. This thesis can be restated to stress Twain's mounting pessimism - a deterministic bias so bleak that almost all human activities, virtuous or otherwise, shrink into microscopic insignificance. Twain's final, posthumous novel, *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916), is also "historical" in that it is set in medieval Austria, its message, however, is that human history is neither comic nor tragic, neither progressive nor reactionary, but fundamentally unrel.

Pieces of evidence can be produced in support of all the above propositions. There is no doubt, for instance, that as he grew older Mark Twain wavered in his ideas as to the role of humour. Was "fun" mainly a method of amusing, and so winning a mass audience? He obviously cared a great deal about the techniques of comedy, spoken and written: the deadpan delivery, the seeming *non sequitur*, the exact timing of the "clunker". On the other hand, he sought to justify himself, oxymoronically, as a serious entertainer, maintaining that his brand of humour, at least, was inherently humanitarian and reformist. However, put the point by regarding that except for political humour, notably J. R. Lowell, American funny men before Twain "chose the wrong side ... they were on the side of slavery, of drunkenness, and of irreligion; the friends of civilization were their prey; their split was thoroughly vulgar and base".

Twain commentators have contended that Twain's temperament, and his circle of friends, imposed impossible strains. Certainly he cannot help noticing his lapses into sentimentality, especially in writing about women and children. There is also Twain the entrepreneur - an aspect that led him to attribute to the superstitious-mechanic Hank Morgan talents and ambitions (eg. running a stock exchange) more appropriate to the banking magnate J. P. Morgan. This was the Twain who from time to time announced his imminent retirement from the drudgery of authorship, on the calculation that he could live off royalties and investments.

However valid these explanations, more remains to be said, with emphasis laid on the cultural context rather than Twain's own idiosyncrasy of biography. Howells was correct in believing that Twain signalled the arrival of some new force in literature which had to do with mood, style, versatility in genre and breadth of appeal. One of the puzzles in Twain's story is how by the early 1870s he was able to gain recognition, at home and in Europe, as an important man of letters. At that stage Twain's *curriculum vitae* included little more than the celebrated jumping frog story, popularity as a platform humorist, and *The Innocents Abroad* (1899). The record itself is not big enough to account for his astonishing reception in the Anglo-American literary realm. The popularity came, I think, because he filled a gap - the need hitherto met by W. M. Thackeray and Charles Dickens, who died in 1863 and 1870 respectively. Thackeray and Dickens both began as (with comic pseudonyms), moved into more serious art, wrote serious, and prolific. Both lectured, Dickens with especial

histrionic flair. In 1846 both brought out travel narratives, Thackeray's *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* and Dickens's *Pictures from Italy*, which combined solemn art-appreciation with passages of facetious swagger. Both as professional authors produced for the Christmas market. Both tried their hand at historical novels (Thackeray's *Henry Esmond*, Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*). And, to repeat, both died in mid-career, leaving a vacuum that no one else seemed quite equipped to fill. By default, in came the American claimant, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, a.k.a. Mark Twain.

The parallels with Twain are intriguing. And he indeed wrote a play and a novel entitled *The American Claimant* (1892), probably inspired by the case of the Tichborne Claimant, the English real-life drama of the early 1870s which Twain had followed with avid interest. The claimant to the Tichborne family fortune was deemed to be a fraud, and so was Colonel Sellers, the American "heir" of Twain's story. At no conscious level, however, did he think

that he had stepped into someone else's shoes, or that he was inferior to quality. We do know that Twain said he had never been able to laugh at *Pickwick Papers*, the book that brought early fame to Dickens. Moreover, he came to detest his one-time friend Bret Harte, and counted among Harte's faults a tendency to plagiarize, from Dickens. In 1879, too, he was bruised by a clipping from a London newspaper which, in a review of *Life on the Mississippi*, called Twain "more English and less thoroughly Yankee" than Twain's, and added that the crude lack of reverence in *Innocents Abroad* would prevent such humour from ever reaching the heights occupied by Dickens and Thackeray.

Consciously or not, Mark Twain did achieve an Anglo-American renown almost as great as that of Sir Walter Scott, more popularly based than that of the gentlemanly Thackeray, and possibly equivalent to that of the spectacularly self-made entertainer-moralist Scott. Scott was the only one of the three Twain publicly disparaged - and this from *Life on the Mississippi* mainly in the guise of an indictment of the false chivalry of the American South, which he blamed on an excessive appetite for reading Scott's romances. Twain studied Scott, however, in preparation for his own ventures into historical fiction; and there is clear evidence that he felt such an endeavour was fitting for important authors on the plane he had attained with Thackeray, Dickens and perhaps that other prolific, well-known British novelist, Bulwer-Lytton.

In other words, Twain regarded historical fiction as a genuine challenge. It would well, in Britain and America. Authors as famous as Dickens and Twain must win approval on both sides of the Atlantic: hence the passionate interest of both men in improving international copyright protection. Some of this work was designed for the increasingly sizeable "juvenile" market. Twain himself admitted that he had picked up notions for *The Prince and the Pauper* from Charlotte Yonge, whose tales of English history for young people included *The Little Duke* and *The Prince and the Pauper*. Twain's *Prince and the Pauper* was intended to sell to readers of all ages and in many countries; it is possible (not surprising) that he was eager to be published in other languages. But on some higher plane, *The Prince*, like *Joan of*

Arc and (more confusedly) *A Connecticut Yankee*, was visualized by Twain not as a hasty commercial offering, but as a demonstration of his full literary armament.

Despite mock-humorous disclaimers, Twain felt he could speak to a worldwide audience, as Dickens had done. In part this was because of the universality of humour. In part it derived from his own unvarying certainty: that the best English was now being written by Americans, and that the very best came from his pen. We should add that, hostile reviewers aside, a multitude of people agreed with him.

Twain devoted an extraordinary intensity of effort to denouncing the stylistic errors of *bêtes noires* such as Matthew Arnold and James Fenimore Cooper, as if their literary sins were forms of moral depravity. To be made an Oxford D Litt, in 1907, was almost to suggest that the republic of letters was better understood than the world of commerce. King was in fact the court of intimates in these last years.

This is not to say he was ultimately

worried that if actually put into service the machine would "turn this bold land of yeomanry and manhood into one community of grunting traders and sickly artisans. *Mori Dieu!* We are over-commenced as it is..." Even so, the Earl is sensible enough to grasp that "if thou canst succeed in making the elements do the work of man with equal precision, but with far greater force and rapidly, thou must multiply eventually, and, by multiplying, cheapen, all the products of industry; that thou must give to this country the market of the world, - and that thing would be the true alchemy that turneth all to gold." The Kingmaker determines to encourage the inventor, for the good of mankind and above all of England. He warns his assembly not to accuse Adam of black magic: "For ye wot well that the commons, from ignorance, would impute all to witchcraft that passeth their understanding."

But there is a cleric-villain, Friar Bungey, as envious, ignorant, bigoted and vicious as Twain's Merlin. Bungey contrives the destruction of the "Eureka" machine and a painful

death for the hapless inventor.

Did Twain read *The Last of the Barons*? Did the tale lodge in his subconscious, surfacing when he began the saga of Hank Morgan? It seems likely enough but perhaps it does not greatly matter. What is important to grasp is that in the last third of the nineteenth century dozens of authors, British and American and some from other countries, drew eclectically upon a large available store of legends, myths, and stories. Including R. L. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Another much read novel, *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) anticipates Hank Morgan's Haggard hero, in peril among savages, overcomes them through foreknowledge, that a solar eclipse is about to occur, the exchange of roles in *The Prince and the Pauper* can be compared to P. Anstey's comic English novel *Vice Versa* (1882), in which a wretched schoolboy is delighted to change places with his father, a butler, a point of view business man. In 1889, the same year as *A Connecticut Yankee*, another American historical novel, *The Green War Syndicate*, published by the Green War Syndicate, an ingenious fantasy of future technological combat.

One other fascinating anticipation deserves attention: Several novels by Edward Bulwer-Lytton were in Twain's Hartford library, among them *The Last of the Barons* (1843). It deals with the fifteenth-century Earl of Warwick, the "Kingmaker" at whose castle the story of Hank Morgan is introduced. Warwick is a powerful figure, though finally killed in a civil war, his day, unusually open-minded: a subplot involves a scientist-inventor, named Adam Warner, who at one moment applies his intelligence to improving the design of the primitive cannon of his period. His main task however is to perfect his "Eureka" machine, a kind of steam engine. What Warner explains the project to the Earl, who

In a memorial volume such as this (compiled for the fortieth anniversary of Ford's death in 1939) we may not find the newest criticism or most original scholarship, but we may at least be able to gain a fair impression of the current accepted standing of the writer in question. A strong and familiar line on Ford Madox Ford appears from these essays. After a more or less perfunctory celebration of *The Good Soldier*, which all literate people admire, critics move awkwardly into a defensive introduction to, or attempted justification of, *Parade's End* or *The Fifth Queen*, his series of historical novels about Katherine Howard. The excellence of Ford's writing is soon forgotten and replaced by an account of the reasons for its being neglected.

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Jules Verne, Edward Bellamy, H. G. Wells - addressed themselves to what has become known as "futureology".

Several others looked back, often to Thackeray or Plantagenet England, a few hinted at burlesque, perhaps remembering the absurd fiasco of the Eglinton Tournament of 1839 - a romantic pageant in Scotland washed out by rain. Most were more or less in earnest. The American Charles Major, for example, sold many thousands of copies of his historical romance *When Knighthood Was in Flower* (1898). It and similar novels prompted Howells to complain that in current literature "nothing of late has been heard but the din of arms, the horrid tumult of the swashbuckler swashing on his buckler." William Morris (eg. *A Dream of John Bull*, 1888) was among those who resorted to the past in order to create fables of an alternative future.

The more ambitious a writer, the more diversely experimental at a rule, and perhaps the more realistic. Bulwer-Lytton had a go at almost everything, even a novel of the future (*The Coming Race*). Arthur Conan Doyle, unhappy at being confined to the exploits of Sherlock Holmes, ventured both into historical fiction and into stories of ultra-modern combat.

Mark Twain was shaped by this Anglo-American milieu. He also helped to shape it, being more gifted and more erratic than a number of his contemporaries. As an American, who had indeed started out as a "funny man", he was perhaps under exceptional pressure to prove himself entitled to equal Thackeray and Dickens. We may still feel that his very best work was located in the Mississippi Valley. But he was versatile. He wished to prove himself in He did genuinely share the complex enthusiasm of his age for historical romance. He had, he told Howells, felt "jubilation" in the writing of *The Prince and the Pauper* - at ease, confident in his power to bring the past alive in the present. Mark Twain's forays into English and European history were in his own estimation as justified as, perhaps finer than, all his other writings.

It merits sympathetic consideration. And, whatever our reservations as to Twain's skill at historical pastiche, a glance at the efforts of other authors in the same vein helps to bring out his decisive superiority. Gadzooks, what he could have done if he had set out to dissect the "literary offences" of *When Knighthood Was in Flower* or of *The Last of the Barons*!

The green baize door

By Richard Brown

SONDRA J. STANG (Editor): The Presence of Ford Madox Ford: A Memorial Volume of Essays, Poems, and Memoirs. 245pp. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 0 8122 7794 5

In a memorial volume such as this (compiled for the fortieth anniversary of Ford's death in 1939) we may not find the newest criticism or most original scholarship, but we may at least be able to gain a fair impression of the current accepted standing of the writer in question. A strong and familiar line on Ford Madox Ford appears from these essays. After a more or less perfunctory celebration of *The Good Soldier*, which all literate people admire, critics move awkwardly into a defensive introduction to, or attempted justification of, *Parade's End* or *The Fifth Queen*, his series of historical novels about Katherine Howard. The excellence of Ford's writing is soon forgotten and replaced by an account of the reasons for its being neglected.

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"critical attitude" among the English whom he thought almost incapable of achieving one. He was tireless in the encouragement of young writers (as personal memoirs from Jean Rhys and Robert Lowell, *inter alia*, confirm) and described himself as "a sort of halfway house between nonpublishable youth and real money - a sort of green baize door that everyone kicks both on entering and on leaving."

Besides the accounts of his editorial work there is a lively and engaging essay by Alison Lurie on his children's fairy tales, an account of his wartime propaganda writing, a number of photographs and personal letters, and a piece of previously unpublished prose. There is even a piece by a distinguished collector of Fordiana. This variety makes the book a worthy tribute, despite its reluctance to shed the crippling apologetic critical mode.

The University of California Press has just released in paperback *Leah*, Leah's biography, *Herman Melville*, which was first published in 1951 (354pp. £5.50, 0 520 00575 9). In his preface, the author states that the aim in the book was "to place the basic facts of Melville's life in their proper physical, historical, intellectual and literary contexts" about his formation. Melville gives about his voyages in *Typee* and *Moby-Dick*, is unique to one person, coupled with a will to resist a partnership that will compromise it. These two have been, albeit negatively, in *Doing It with Style* (157pp. Eyre Methuen, £5.95, 0 413 47490 9).

Current concerns

By Bevis Hillier

GAVIN STAMP: Temples of Power. Lithographs by Glynn Boyd Harte. 80pp. Cynnet Press. £85. 0 9502154 9 X

For a long time Glynn Boyd Harte was considered to be "of the school of" David Hockney and Adrian George - and there was some justification for that, in the pert sketchiness and casual vivacity of his chalk drawings; though nobody could question his adeptness in that medium. He was already sloughing off the type-casting in his fine illustrations to Sir John Betjeman's *Morland*, published by Jonathan Gilt; and the superb lithographs in *Temples of Power* show that he has now escaped from it, altogether. With all their talents, neither Hockney nor George can be regarded as an architectural draughtsman. Boyd Harte is one: no pedantic recorder of pediments and architraves, but an artist who suggests what he feels about a building as well as the image which meets his retina.

The production of this book, which has been overseen by Simon Rendall, a director of the Curwen Press, does full justice to Boyd Harte's work, and details such as the delightful cover pattern and the jacket design of Battersea seen through a mist rival the finest book-making of the 1920s and 1930s.

Gavin Stamp also has advanced to a new standing. He too might previously have been labelled "derivative", and certainly in his strident enthusiasm of his age for historical romance. He had, he told Howells, felt "jubilation" in the writing of *The Prince and the Pauper* - at ease, confident in his power to bring the past alive in the present. Mark Twain's forays into English and European history were in his own estimation as justified as, perhaps finer than, all his other writings.

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Rushing down their copper Dang'rous currents light the lamp: Who will lead us to their sources? Glynn Boyd Harte and Gavin Stamp.

From the porticoes and portals Drawn by Harte, described by Stamp, Surge, invisible to mortals, Vicious volt and angry amp.

Early plants were "nondescript" ("In a shed in Camberwell"); Later ones, though "temple-like", Made our ovens hot as hell.

Magna Volk's electric traction (Brighton, 1883) Was the first e'er seen in action On the front, beside the sea.

Far from Brighton's vile "Marina", "Neo-Mannerist" is Bristol's Station built by Curtis Green - a Brie of tow'n like duelling pistols.

Colonel Crompton's "Lighting Station" Dates from 1888; It supplied illumination To the unilluminate.

* St Lawrence suffered martyrdom, on a gridiron in Rome in AD 258.

In his many previous lectures on style, Quentin has insisted that it is the exaggeration of whatever is unique to one person, coupled with a will to resist a partnership that will compromise it. These two have been, albeit negatively, in *Doing It with Style* (157pp. Eyre Methuen, £5.95, 0 413 47490 9).

"Gains" these pioneers, the gasmen Pitted all their flair and flare. (They would quiver like aspen Could they give electric chair!)

"Mr Therm", a spiky elf, Advertised the gasworks' lure - "Mantles for the mantelshelf: Bulbs electric don't endure!"

Electricity was cleaner, And you didn't need a match. We used Bellings in "Coolgreene" (Gas beyond the gasworks' reach).

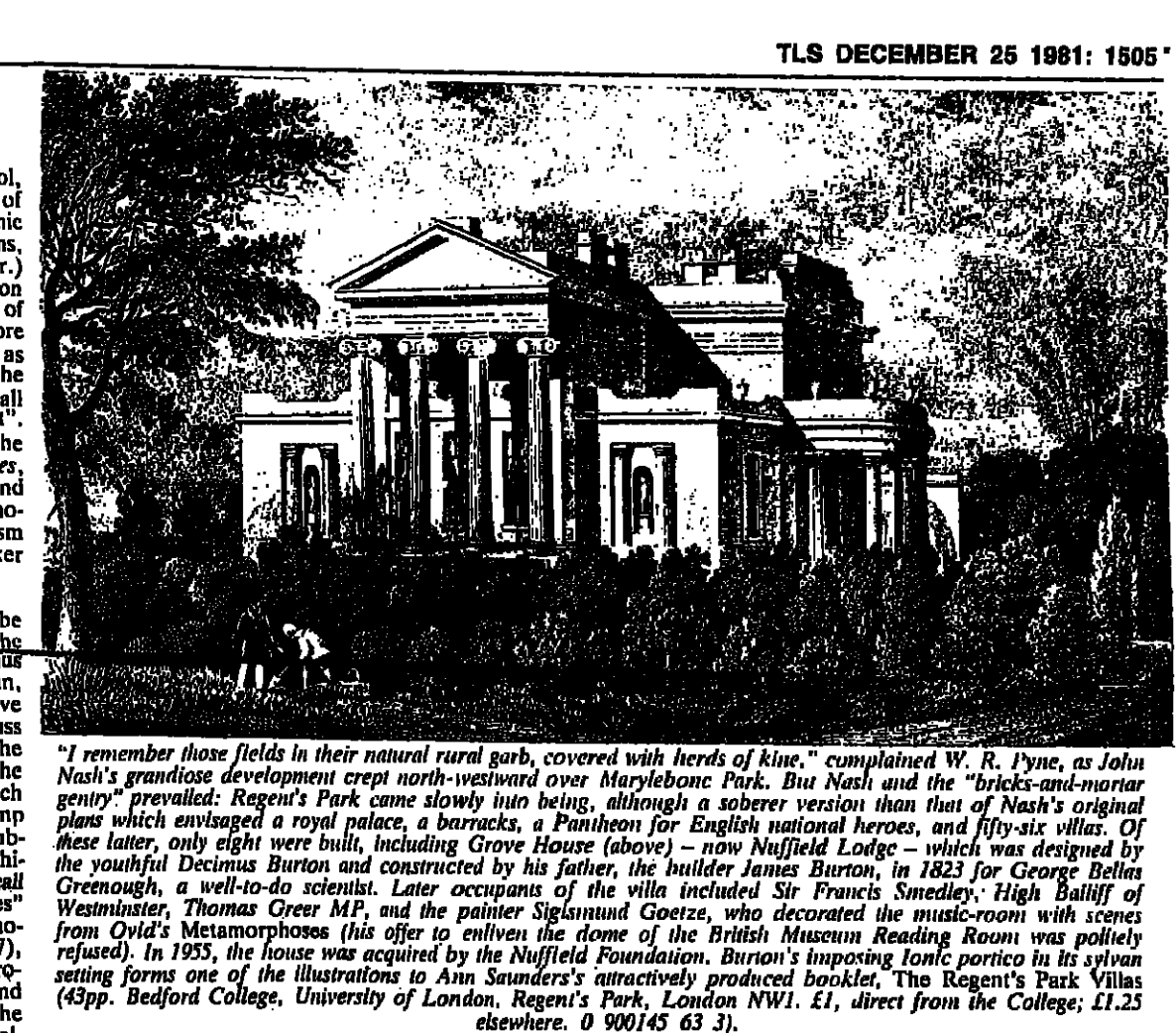
Now we're firmly on the Grid (Lawrence) despite ourselves; We must face out untemper quid, Unsolicited by elves.

Obsolete as Georgian stables Are the stations of the past; Fluted chimneys ("upturned tables") Fail to the destroyer's blast.

Gone the power, gone the glory - Pow'r which seemed to vie with God's: Councils, Socialist or Tory, Send in demolition squads.

Of the chimney-stacks diamond-bered, And the arches torn apart, Only those will be remembered Marked by Stamp and known by Harte.

which he has written with Donald Carroll. The rules of style have not been changed, but the camp assurance and the self-righteous have been exchanged for a commonsensical tone and a surplus of anecdotes about famous people.



"I remember those fields in their natural rural garb, covered with herds of kine," complained W. R. Inye, as John Nash's grandiose development crept north-westward over Marylebone Park. But Nash and the "bricks-and-mortar genies" prevailed: Regent's Park came slowly into being, although a soberer version than that of Nash's original plans which envisaged a royal palace, a barracks, a Pantheon for English national heroes, and fifty-six villas. Of these latter, only eight were built, including Grove House (above) - now Nuffield Lodge - which was designed by the youthful Decimus Burton and constructed by his father, the builder James Burton, in 1823 for George Bellas Greenough, a well-to-do scientist. Later occupants of the villa included Sir Francis Smiley, High Bailiff of Westminster, Thomas Green MP, and the painter Sigismund Goetze, who decorated the music-room with scenes from Old's Metamorphoses (his offer to enlarge the dome of the British Museum Reading Room was politely refused). In 1953, the house was acquired by the Nuffield Foundation. Burton's imposing Ionic portico is its skyline setting forms one of the illustrations to Ann Saunders's attractively produced booklet, *The Regent's Park Villas* (43pp. Bedford College, University of London, Regent's Park, London NW1. £1, direct from the College; £1.25 elsewhere. 0 900145 63 3).

Contentious insularity

By William Haley

MARGUERITE SYVRET and JOAN STEVENS: *Balleine's History of Jersey*. 320pp. Chichester: Phillimore. £15. 0 8533 413 6

If George Eliot's observation that the happiest nations have no history is true, then the island of Jersey should be a disconsolate and joyless place: there can be few areas of roughly nine miles by five whose self-governing inhabitants have had a more contentious, ebullient, and memorable progress through the centuries.

From the mammoth-hunters who were its cave-dwellers 50,000 years ago to the Neolithic people who inhabited the area for some 1,300 years, and on to Viking, Norman, French and Nazi invaders, there have been recurring struggles for survival. Through all their history the natives of Jersey, of whatever stock they were and wherever they came from, have fought invaders with determination, and fought among themselves with zeal. They have never been too exhausted to keep English encroachers on their liberties at bay. On the whole they have enjoyed themselves.

History depends on there being historians. Jersey has been fortunate. It is perhaps a stretch to claim the twelfth-century Jersey-born poet, Wace, as the first. He was a sketchy and selective chronicler; but he did keep the fame of Jersey and Guernsey alive in those unlettered days. Being, desire, Dumarsais, Pater, Ather, and others have contributed in indirect ways. Much has been gleaned about Jersey's active part in the Civil War from the massive, 400,000 words diary of Jean Chevalier. But Jersey's best and most complete historian was a man of our own time. The Reverend George Balleine came into general notice five years ago when, to mark the 200th anniversary of the War of American Independence, *All for the King*, his biography of St George Carteret, who was at various times Jersey's king, pope's master, was published posthumously. But before that he had established himself locally with *A History of the Island of Jersey*. It had the same qualities as the Carteret book, clarity, speed without any air of hurry, calm judgment. The book, published in 1950, ended with Jersey's liberation from the Nazis in 1945 and the immediate aftermath.

Balleine died in 1966. Much has been added to the island's prehistory and modern developments since then. The archives of the Société Jersiaise,

which has sponsored this volume, have been more systematically explored. With this and other material, Marguerite Syvret and Joan Stevens, herself a Jersey historian of note, have produced a new edition of Balleine's work, adding over a third to its length. It is a handsome volume, with a wealth of pictures in colour and monochrome, line drawings, maps, sources, and indexes. The enlarged work can be criticized for, being too detailed: some information in its closing pages is not historical but trivial. Throughout, the inaccuracies cause the prose to run easily than that of the original Balleine volume. But the ground is not likely to be gone over at this length or with this thoroughness again. Balleine Mark II will become definitive.

For most people the history of Jersey begins with the Battle of Hastings in 1066. In fact, as Balleine pointed out, that was fought midway through the Norman rule of the island. The Dukes of Normandy ruled Jersey for 135 years before Conquest and for 138 years after it. Later invaders included the Scots King, David Bruce; Owen, the son of a Welsh prince in the service of the French King; and the more formidable Bertrand du Guesclin.

France, whatever England's relations with her, remained a perennial threat. With only fifteen miles of sea separating Jersey from the Cotentin peninsula, the temptation was great. The last battle, which the islanders won, was fought in 1781. Napoleon thought of invading Jersey. He formulated against the Government of His Britannic Majesty for permitting, nay, authorizing, "hundreds of brigands, assassins, fire-bugs to find refuge in France, whence they slip back to France to commit further crimes." Jersey pirates and privateers sailing under Letters of Marque were for long provocations to France, particularly during the War of American Independence. Napoleon's threat was taken so seriously by high authority that in 1803 the Lieutenant-Governor, General Gordon, told the island's parliament that martial law should be imposed. The islanders rose in violent wrath. The States rejected the proposal. Not until 1940 did troops from France conquer the island; they were German.

In spite of all the international adventures and hazards, the domestic history of the island is even more hoisterous, and certainly more instructive. Like all small independent states - and, despite the ultimate restraints of the Privy Council, Jersey can historically be so described - the dangers of dictatorship have been great. George Carteret and Charles Le Geyre were members of the oldest Jersey families.

Each - Carteret from 1643 to 1651, Le Geyre from 1750 to 1781 - ruled the island autocratically. They overrode all opposition, they filled offices with their relations or place-men. Appeals by the islanders to the Privy Council were in the main fruitless. (It must be said, however, that, taking a longer view, when the Council did deign to intervene, it came down on the side of the people more often than not.)

Challengers to autocracy arose. Most notable was Jean Dumaresq, the island's "first Liberal in the modern sense of word." The islanders became split into personal, if not truly political, parties. Voters were bribed, made drunk, kidnapped, murdered on small islands, to prevent their getting to the polls. It is significant that Jersey's stormy political warfare of the past has left it today with a Parliament of fifty-two members (Senators, Deputies, and Constables) each independent of the others. The islanders feel their safety from Government rests on the unaligned judgement and individual common sense of their legislators.

Although Hitler's seizure of Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, and Sark in 1940 was the islanders' most traumatic experience in this century, Balleine did not allow it to get out of perspective. Nor have his revisions. (Those who want the full story will find it in Charles Cruickshank's admirable *The German Occupation of the Channel Islands*, published in 1975.) Odious as that experience was, it has been eclipsed by Jersey's dramatic recovery after it.

A strong thread running through *Balleine's History of Jersey* is the island's resolute determination to be economically self-supporting. After fishing in early times, knitting, shipbuilding, shipping, overseas trading, one field of profit followed another. One of the most romantic and inspiring adventures was the Canada trade, well dealt with in this volume. As these older sources weakened, first agriculture, then tourism, now the activities of an offshore financial island, have each in turn brought prosperity. Balleine's history, taxation basically unchanged for forty years, annual balance of payments surpluses have resulted.

"Provided it lasts," the caveat of Napoleon's mother is timely. Jersey's future is now finely balanced. If its present activities decline, what will replace them? If they continue to increase, can they be accommodated? The island's space, natural resources, and essential services all have absolute limits. Some are being neared. Instantly immigration has slowed. The Jersey-born are still in the majority. There is much in this, too, for the States confidence, in the control of their future.

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